

# ELECTORAL PRACTICES IN THE U.S.S.R.

by  
George Barr Carson, Jr.



1956



ATLANTIC PRESS  
London

761 2738

First published in Great Britain 1956

*All rights reserved*

R

324 47

B

56-38700



*Manufactured in the United States of America*

## PREFACE

The present study of soviet electoral practice was made possible by an appointment as Senior Fellow at the Russian Institute of Columbia University during 1951-52. It is one aspect of a broader investigation of local institutions of government in the Soviet Union, their organization, function, and financing.

Local soviets provided the principle basis of examination. Included in this category are krai, oblast, okrug, raion, urban, city-raion (or ward), and rural soviets under the present territorial administrative division, as well as the former gubernia, uезд and volost congresses. The supreme soviets of the union, of the union republics, and of autonomous republics are, of course, elected by similar methods. Since that is the case, and the average citizen's closest contact with elections as an instrument of government is at the lowest organizational level, this study is largely confined to elections for local soviets.

Sources fall into six main categories:

1. The constitutions of the union and the several union republics, and the collected laws and ordinances of their central authorities, provide the basic material. The Sobranie ukazovaniy of the RSFSR and the Sobranie zakonov of the USSR were the most complete, but incomplete similar collections for the Transcaucasian Federation, the Turkmen SSR, the Abkhazian SSR (while part of the Transcaucasian Federation), and the Ukrainian SSR, all available in the Russian or Ukrainian languages, were also used.

2. Several excellent manuals compiled to guide members of the administrative system provide additional directives and indicate, if not actual practice, at least the official norms in electoral procedure. Useful examples of these Spravochniki are that for employees of the courts and the procurator's office (1949), that for members of executive committees (1947), and that for employees of soviets (1939).

## PREFACE

3. Special editions of particular laws, with elaborate commentaries, were published by various official agencies at one time or another. The Russian and Ukrainian election statutes for 1938 and 1939 are examples; these often give excellent illustrative material and cases. For earlier periods there are detailed commentaries on the basic statutes concerning gubernia, raion, and volost congresses as well as urban and rural soviets.

4. Articles in specialized periodicals, such as Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i pravo, or the official organs of important agencies, such as Vlast sovetov, and Bolshevik, often have detailed analyses of election results, or theoretical discussions of soviet principles of government.

5. Press accounts, pictures, and articles in popular magazines make possible some reconstruction of electoral processes, when used in conjunction with the preceding materials.

6. Interviews with refugees can sometimes provide illuminating detail. The Research Program on the USSR, in New York, was able to locate for me a few former members of local soviets or electoral commissions.

Additional materials appear in the notes for each chapter.

In the 1920's very elaborate statistics on election results were published. Since then the figures made available have declined steadily in quantity until they have almost reached the vanishing point. Occasionally figures in some detail will be presented for a single local soviet, such as for the city of Moscow in the 1953 elections. For the local and republic elections of February and March 1955, only the total number of voters in the several republics was available.

George Barr Carson Jr.

Chicago, April 1, 1955

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface . . . . .	v
INTRODUCTION. PREREVOLUTIONARY GENERAL ELECTIONS . . . . .	1
CHAPTER	
I. "PROLETARIAN DICTATORSHIP": THE FIRST USSR CONSTITUTION . . . . .	9
Direct and Indirect Election . . . . .	13
Norms of Representation . . . . .	15
Popular Participation--the Franchise . . . . .	17
Popular Participation--Nominating . . . . .	24
Election Boards and Electoral Assemblies . . . . .	27
Congresses of Soviets . . . . .	38
A Review of Results . . . . .	39
II. "SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY": THE STALIN CONSTITUTION OF 1936 . . . . .	49
Single Member Districts . . . . .	54
Qualifications of Candidates and Electors . . . . .	56
The Bloc of Party and Non-Party Bolsheviks . . . . .	59
Election Boards and Voting Procedure . . . . .	67
A Review of Results . . . . .	80
III. SOME COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS . . . . .	85
Centralization . . . . .	87
Recall . . . . .	89
The Deputy-Constituent Relationship . . . . .	90
The Principle of Unanimity . . . . .	93
APPENDIX. STATUTE ON LOCAL ELECTIONS, RSFSR . . . . .	105
NOTES . . . . .	137

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Sample Ballot for Local Soviet Election . . . . .	74
Chart A. Electoral Procedure in Voronezh Gubernia, Law of 1907 . . . . .	101
Chart B. Indirect Electoral Procedure, USSR Prior to 1936 . . . . .	102
Chart C. Universal, Equal, Direct Elections, USSR 1955 . . . . .	103

## INTRODUCTION

### PREREVOLUTIONARY GENERAL ELECTIONS

After the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia in 1917 a vast amount of effort was expended to create an illusion of novelty about the soviet state structure. Despite the theoretical tenet of Marx and Lenin that the proletariat cannot simply lay hold of the existing state machinery and use it for the purposes of proletarian dictatorship, practical necessities insured the use of many forms characteristic of the defunct "bourgeois" state. The Bolshevik leaders had no experience in government and were to some extent dependent upon administrative personnel which did know something of the mechanics of government. Dependent also upon the terminology for political institutions developed by a preproletarian society, the Bolsheviks were even more dependent upon the forms which past administrative technicians had evolved.

Models for soviet institutions can be found, to a marked degree, in the institutional structure of imperial Russia. The Bolsheviks, of course, did not invent the Russian word "soviet" (council), nor were they solely responsible for developing the peculiar type of council of workers deputies (soviet) which became the new class institution upon which the state structure of the Bolshevik regime came to be based. Representative councils of a class character were a feature of the imperial society, especially among the peasantry but found in all classes. The most striking parallel, however, in many respects, is provided by the electoral machinery of tsarist Russia.

After the imperial bureaucracy had been forced, by threat of revolution, to introduce elected assemblies in Russia the problem was to regulate the electoral procedure in such a way that the classes favorable to the tsarist regime should predominate. The most important electoral machin-

ery was that created for elections to the imperial duma. The duma electoral law, first promulgated in 1905, was modified by interpretation in 1906 and then changed in detail in 1907. The result was a law admirably calculated to weight the voting of numerically small but friendly classes, such as the large landowners and manufacturers, and to restrict the participation of radical segments of other classes. This electoral law regulated the only electoral procedure with which the majority of the Russian people, revolutionists or bureaucrats, had any direct experience. Since it not only provided the basis of Russian experience with elections but also had been skillfully drawn to insure dominance by a small minority it was a very natural model for soviet draftsmen to follow when faced with the problem of writing a constitution that would insure dominance by the minority which was the Communist party. In order to provide a basis of comparison with soviet electoral practice and to indicate the features of continuity in Russian electoral procedure between tsarist and soviet regimes, a brief description of the imperial electoral system follows.

Generally speaking there were six features that characterized tsarist electoral practice:

1. The elections were not universal. While the suffrage was fairly wide there were some general exclusions; the minimum age requirement was twenty-five, but women, students, soldiers and sailors did not participate. There were numerous specific exclusions that affected a smaller number of people as individuals.

2. Elections were held not on the basis of all voters in a district but of the voters in a district divided into five classes or curiae of voters. The curiae were not equally distributed, furthermore, but the preponderance of voting strength lay with the large landowning class as against all the others combined.

3. Election of members of the imperial duma was not direct but indirect, through electoral assemblies. Even in the selection of electors for the electoral assemblies, direct vote was enjoyed only by the large landowners and the



first and second curiae of city voters. Workers chose commissioners, who then met to choose electors, and this same procedure applied to small landowners. Peasants did not even choose directly the commissioners through whom their electors were chosen but instead elected delegates to a cantonal assembly, which chose the commissioners who then chose the electors to participate in the electoral assembly. The indirect election, therefore, was a two stage affair for the great landowners and urban householders, three stage for workers and small landowners, and four stage for peasants. Only the first and second curiae of city voters in five major cities of European Russia and two major cities in Poland enjoyed direct election of members of the imperial дума.

4. Each voters group, or assembly of commissioners or electors, was permitted to choose commissioners, delegates, or electors only from its own ranks. Representation was thus restricted to narrow class lines, and membership in the imperial дума was the consequence of a two, three, or four stage sifting or screening of candidates.

5. The bureaucracy had a direct role in the electoral process and could influence the election by administrative action. The minister of the interior, the governors of the provinces and other specified officials had the right to divide, if it seemed expedient to them to do so, the voters of any class into more than one assembly along the lines of nationality. On the other hand they were not required to make such a division. The result was that a Russian bureaucracy could and did use this provision to protect a Russian minority but refused to use it to protect a non-Russian minority. Similarly the officials might set up a regional division of the voters in any given class if the district involved were large but, again, were not compelled to do so for the convenience of the voters if the bureaucracy considered such division inexpedient.

6. Discussion in advance of who should be chosen for commissioners, electors or candidates, and campaigning for candidates, was exceptionally difficult because of admin-

istrative and police interference.

With the exception of the seven major cities of European Russia and Poland which had the privilege of direct elections, the final election of members of the imperial duma was made by a provincial congress of electors. The relationship of voters in various classes to the provincial electoral body has been outlined above and is also indicated in Chart A (p. 101). The manner of procedure in selecting the electors can be further clarified by a more detailed analysis of the choosing of electors by the great landowners (the most privileged) and by the peasants (the least privileged), the other classes having a gradation between the two.

In each county or district (uezd) subdivision of a province (gubernia), the local zemstvo administration drew up a list of all landowners in the district. Since zemstvo organization had been instituted in only about two-thirds of the provinces, in the other areas the list of local landowners was drawn up by the county police administration (ministry of the interior). Landowners were divided into two categories, large and small landowners; the standard for this division was established in the law and differed from province to province but on the average owners of less than 400 desiatins were small landowners. In order to choose their electors for the provincial electoral congress the landowners convened in a county assembly. Only the large landowners participated directly in this voters' meeting, however; the small landowners sent commissioners to represent them in the choice of electors, the number of commissioners being determined by pooling the total landholdings of the small owners and dividing by the minimum standard for determining large landowners in that district. For example, there might be 100 small landowners whose total property consisted of 4,000 desiatins; if the standard for large landowner was 400 desiatins, the small landowners would be entitled to 10 commissioners to vote for them in the landowners voting assembly. Each large landowner voted in the assembly as an individual; a

dozen of them could thus outvote 100 small landowners. The small landowners had their own preliminary assembly for the purpose of choosing their commissioners. Representatives of church orders, which in many provinces owned vast tracts of land, met with the small landowners and sometimes outvoted the lay owners in the preliminary assembly. The number of electors in any provincial electoral congress which each county landowners assembly selected was specified in a table appended to the electoral law.

Both the preliminary small landowners meeting and the county landowners voting assembly convened on dates and in places selected by the provincial governor. It was also his responsibility to decide whether either type of meeting should be subdivided--for example by area, one for the northern part of the county and one for the southern; or by type of property, one for agricultural property owners and one for mining properties; or by nationality, one for Russian landowners and one for Poles, Lithuanians and others combined. To be chosen as a commissioner by a preliminary assembly or as an elector by the landowners voting assembly, a majority rather than a plurality was required. The presiding officer was the local marshal of the nobility, or if necessary a landowner of the district appointed by the governor to preside.

The first stage of peasant participation came in the cantonal (volost) assembly. This was a body composed of elected delegates from villages on the basis of one for each ten households. It had a very limited and local administrative function, chiefly related to problems of land allotment and crop rotation. The cantonal assembly chose two commissioners, whether the population in the canton was 2,000 or 60,000, and was required to choose not only from those of peasant origin, but from peasant householders actually engaged in cultivation. This was a change from the first дума election law, under which a peasant schoolteacher might be chosen; also under the first law not the regular cantonal assembly but one especially elected for the purpose chose the commissioners. The result of such intri-

cate procedure was that the majority of the peasants did not participate directly in the electoral process even at the first stage.

The commissioners chosen by cantonal assemblies then met in a county assembly, on a day and at a place named by the governor. As in the case of the landowners so with the peasants, the governor might or might not, at his sole discretion, divide the county assembly by geographical or nationality sections. If the county assembly was divided into sections the number of peasant electors to be chosen for the provincial electoral congress was apportioned among the sections according to the number of commissioners in each section. Again the presiding officer of the county assembly of peasant commissioners was the local marshal of the nobility or a substitute appointed by the governor. Only duly chosen commissioners might be picked as electors, by majority and not plurality. The number of each county's peasant electors to the provincial electoral congress was specifically listed in the law, just as for other classes.

The last stage of the electoral process resulted in the choice of 5,252 electors for the entire Russian empire, by whom the 442 members of the imperial duma were finally chosen. Except for seven major cities, as already noted, the duma members were chosen by provincial electoral congresses, presided over by the provincial marshal of the nobility but with electors from all classes meeting together. The provincial electoral congress must elect one of the peasant electors to the duma. In the first duma electoral law of 1905, the peasant electors alone chose the peasant duma member; but after the 1907 law all electors participated in this choice. In 28 provinces of European Russia the landowners' electors were a majority in the electoral congress and in effect could name the peasant member of the duma. In the other 22 provinces the landowners and the wealthy class of city electors had a majority in the electoral congress. The provincial electoral congress (with one or two exceptions) then chose a landowner elec-

tor for дума membership. In a few provinces choice of city curia electors was also required. In six provinces the congress then chose a workers' elector for дума membership. If there were any more дума seats to fill by any given provincial electoral congress the choice could be made from any class of electors. The only less privileged class which succeeded in balking choice of its дума member by the privileged landowner group was the workers. In several instances they displayed sufficient organizational solidarity to make their own choice of elector to be named to the дума and forced all others to refuse nomination.

There were many interesting provisions in the дума electoral law making exceptions of various sorts to the procedure described. The Cossack territories were given special treatment, for example, and a few provinces which presented unusual problems had to be individually handled in the law. But it is not the purpose of this brief introduction to describe the imperial electoral system in detail nor trace all of the significant variations in the law between 1905 and 1917.<sup>1</sup> The general outline of the system is sufficient, however, to make clear the major features which offer a parallel to the electoral system used under the soviet regime until the 1936 constitution went into effect. The imperial electoral system combined class and territorial district representation, indirectly elected, rigged in favor of a minority (large landowners) and generally oriented toward a franchise restricted to proprietors. As a rule, complaints about irregularities went to administrative authorities, and decision as to the validity of elections or infringement of voters' rights was not subject to court or even дума review except at the final (provincial electoral congress) stage.

The whole tradition and technique of Russian general elections with which the soviet regime began to work presumed discrimination in voting privileges and manipulation of voting procedure by law and administrative action. The ruling minority used elections not to provide opportunity to

change the government but to secure a "representative" body with a "popular" base which would preserve the regime of the ruling minority. The single exception was the 1917 election to the Constituent Assembly<sup>2</sup> and the procedure used was not accepted by the Bolsheviks precisely because of the results--the Bolsheviks did not win.

## CHAPTER I

### "PROLETARIAN DICTATORSHIP": THE FIRST USSR CONSTITUTION

The first constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics made no provision for the electoral rights of citizens. There was no necessity, since no union official was elected by popular suffrage. The union congress of soviets, which was the chief federal institution that presumed a popular base, was the product of an indirect electoral system and was composed of delegates from republic congresses of soviets. The provisions for direct popular election therefore remained embodied in the republic constitutions; the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic constitution of 1918 contained an elaborate statement of electoral rights, and the other member republics of the union had similar provisions in their constitutions. Although the general outlines for the systems of popular participation in elections were common throughout the union, there was much divergence in local practice, and the picture of local elections is one of delightful irregularity.

It should be remembered that in the era of the first USSR constitution (i. e., prior to 1937) all popular elections were for local organs of state power only. Even the fact of popular election of the local organs, however, was not a popular right that guaranteed public initiative or participation in the process of government. Writs of election were always issued by the all-union central executive committee, and then implemented by the member republics of the union, which set in motion the electoral machinery within their territories. Constitutional statements on the terms of deputies (one year) did not automatically determine election dates, nor limit, in practice, the terms of elected deputies. Initiative from the top, coupled with persistent

efforts to secure the scrupulous observance of legal forms during the electoral process, were and are outstanding features of the soviet electoral system.

The question has sometimes been raised: Why does the USSR have any electoral system at all? In a country where a single political organization of the nature of the Communist party clearly dominated the governmental machinery, and where the character of the state is that of proletarian dictatorship, the results of any election are a foregone conclusion. Why hold elections?

One answer, which should be self-evident, is that the electoral law provides the organizational means by which is selected the personnel of the soviets, the congresses of delegates, and the whole governmental apparatus.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of any manipulation that may be resorted to, the electoral process in fact results in the installation of one individual rather than another in public office. For this reason, if for no other, the electoral process has significance, since the Communist party--although it completely controls the government--is not the state and does not monopolize its offices. At the local level Communist party members fill only a minority of offices.

Another answer, perhaps equally self-evident, is that when the Bolsheviks seized control in Russia they adopted an existing institution, the workers', peasants' and soldiers' soviets, as the new organs of state. The Bolsheviks had not created the institution, but in taking it over to be utilized for their own purposes they were to some extent, at the outset, bound by its fundamental character--the more so in that they had argued the soviets were the products of the times, the proletarians' class instrument in the revolutionary struggle for power. Historically, the workers', peasants' or soldiers' soviet was a representative council based on an electoral principle, and since the soviets, not the Bolshevik party organization, became the state, elections of some sort were inevitable. Furthermore, no element of practice in modern government, however reactionary or despotic the government may be, is more universal



than that of elections, and it is difficult to see how the founders of any new state could have dispensed with it, least of all the Bolsheviks, whose position was sufficiently insecure to require them to respect at least a few of the normal conventions of government, and whose inexperience in governing compelled them to resort to devices invented by others.

If the Bolsheviks, in organizing their "dictatorship of the proletariat" could not well dispense with elections, they could at least rig the electoral statutes to serve Bolshevik ends. This was done, as the electoral provisions in the RSFSR constitution of 1918 make abundantly clear, and the instructions issued for the conduct of elections were modified from time to time as the needs of the Communist party in the country required.

Electoral law is not an end in itself but a device to reflect some set of basic principles; soviet elections, therefore, cannot be understood if approached on the basis of what elections purport to accomplish in France, or Great Britain, or the United States, or Switzerland, or any other cradle of democracy or federalism and representative institutions. The historical context of the development of systems of popular election has a major bearing on the interpretation of them. Certainly the English and American, as well as the French development of popular elections, came from a background where the primary purpose was a check on royal or executive tyranny. The presumption was that individuals or groups had interests that were, or might be, legitimately in conflict with each other, with those of the monarch, or the state as organized. Generally speaking, suffrage was extended in efforts to secure support for factions in political conflict, or to provide leverage in the distribution of power between executive authorities and other branches of government. Only after the curtailment of monarchical power had been accomplished did elections develop into instruments of universal popular participation in government, and the presumption of different interests among participants remained as a fundamental feature of the

electoral system. Division must continue to be reflected in the electoral systems which evolved in this historical manner, or executive government will appear justified in the recovery of its former monopoly and popular election might reasonably be abolished.

The soviet electoral system evolved under quite different circumstances where an existing, though revolutionary, authority needed to be expanded, not checked. An avowed class dictatorship had to be reinforced first; only secondarily did elections become a device to compel-persuade the registration of universal popular affirmation. The two phases of soviet electoral development are illustrated by the overhauling of the original procedure which took place in connection with the adoption of new USSR and republic constitutions in 1936. The original electoral law was based on the possibility of elections in areas the Bolsheviks did not physically dominate. The new electoral laws after 1936 were designed for areas they did. In neither case, however, was the registration of division desired, for such division would weaken the excuse for the monolithic dictatorial organization of the state machinery on a single class base which the Communist party wished, out of theoretical and practical considerations, to operate.

Another and most important function of popular elections is to serve as laboratories of citizenship. From the outset the Communist party looked upon elections, both for state organs and in such institutional elections as those of trade unions, in the light of schools where workers might learn. This feature was reinforced by the frequency of elections, held annually until the five-year plans began, and lasting, altogether, many months each year. The preparations often began in September, and the selection of delegates for the meeting of the republic congress might not be completed until the following May. Yearly elections also made possible a prompt and public weeding out of deputies who were not sufficiently energetic. At least in the beginning, Bolshevik leaders intimated that all workers could learn to run the state machine; if the machine did not go in

the way it was directed the electoral law was modified to re-direct it. And if the state organism was "speyed," as it were, so as to remove much of the theoretical importance of its functions as viewed by non-soviet observers, the worker was still expected to learn from his part in it and to undergo the political education for the masses which became the chief goal of electoral campaigns.

### Direct and Indirect Election

Elections were direct only to the soviets of urban and rural settlements. Technically speaking the councils for higher units in the hierarchy of ruling institutions prior to the 1936 constitution were not soviets, but congresses of delegates from the soviets. The delegates in the district congress were selected by the local soviets, delegates to the provincial congress were selected by the district congress delegates, and so on to the top. As is well known, the system was by no means so simple as it sounds, for urban soviets selected delegates directly to all levels of congresses, rural soviets did not (see chart B, p. 102 ). But by history and by definition the soviet proper was made up of deputies elected by workers, peasants and soldiers. The delegates to congresses, although originally elected as deputies, when sitting as delegates were not chosen as such by the workers. Hence the delegates chosen as a result of any indirect action of selection composed a congress and not a soviet. There were, of course, such institutions as the Council of People's Commissars (Sovet narodnykh kommissarov) or the Supreme Economic Council (Verkhovnyi ekonomicheskii sovet), but these were councils in the literal sense of the Russian word sovet; such councils, for which the term sovet had been used, existed in the pre-1917 imperial administration and should be distinguished from the soviet as a revolutionary institution of worker, peasant or soldier organization.

The hierarchy of soviets and congresses, combining the features of direct and indirect election, was modelled upon well-established Russian tradition. Under the imperial regime indirect representation and election by legally defined classes had been employed, and the concept in Russia dated back at least to the constitutional proposals of M. N. Speransky during the reign of Tsar Alexander I. The marked similarity to the Napoleonic system of indirect election in a centralized territorial administration was designed to secure a like effect of popular participation without sacrificing executive control from above. The French principle of providing that any action of a governmental unit at one level may be annulled by the next unit above was also adopted, and fitted perfectly into the pattern of Communist party organization where all levels are subordinated to those above. With a system of indirect election historically associated with manipulation from the top, and the provision for nullification of action by a higher organ at any point in the governmental apparatus, the Communist party could well afford to accept the article forced upon the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets in 1918 that local affairs should be decided solely by local authorities, the central government being limited to regulating the relations between one local authority and another.<sup>2</sup>

The legal provision for local decision on local affairs carried over into the electoral practice, however, and made for local variation. After the formation of the union there were recurrent efforts to introduce uniformity in electoral practice. The result was a steady progress toward centralization, which was not systematically accomplished until after the new electoral laws went into effect following the 1936 constitution. An analysis of the details of the old electoral system will show that, by Communist standards, the level of participation was low and the opportunities for local option many even after the formation of the union marked the evident consolidation of the new soviet power in Russia. As a consequence the level of activity of soviets varied, as did public opinion regarding them.

### Norms of Representation

In January 1925 L. Kaganovich stated: "Before we can speak of enlivening the soviets, we must put the question of improving the organization of elections to these soviets. At the present time we undoubtedly have in the elections very serious defects, which can bring, and in many places have already produced, the result that the peasantry sometimes do not see in the soviets their own elected organs."<sup>3</sup> The considerable variation in norms for representation would certainly justify not only the peasants, but even certain groups of urban workers in such an attitude.

The apportionment of representation was by number of voters in urban areas, by number of inhabitants in rural areas, as is generally known. The electoral statute permitted local authorities to allot the distribution of mandates, within a definite range which differed with the geographical area concerned. In the city of Leningrad, for example, the ratio was one deputy for each unit of 2-400 voters for workers,\* employees,\*\* Red Army and Navy men.<sup>4</sup> In Karelia the ratio for representation to rural soviets was one deputy for each 25 inhabitants in settlements of under 1000 population. The ratio changed to one per 50 for settlements of 1000-1500, one for 75 in settlements of 1500-2500, and one for 100 in settlements of 2500-3500.<sup>5</sup> In Leningrad oblast (province)

---

\*In general this term is used with respect to the groups in the United States comprising skilled and unskilled labor, whether factory, mill, construction or transport worker, etc.

\*\*By this term is generally intended what might be called white collar workers, including civil servants, in American usage.

the raion congress was made up of delegates from urban soviets in the ratio of one per 100 voters and delegates from rural soviets in the ratio of one per 500 inhabitants. A raion was primarily a rural region, however, and would not ordinarily include cities of any important size. The Murmansk area, which was formerly a part of Leningrad oblast, had a different ratio of representation for raion congresses, the number of voters and inhabitants required per representative being only one-fifth that of other parts of the province. For okrug (regional) congresses delegates were selected in the ratio of one per 800 voters from urban areas, one per 4000 inhabitants from rural areas, Murmansk again being an exception. For the Leningrad oblast congress the ratio was one delegate per 4000 voters from urban areas, and one per 20,000 inhabitants of rural areas.<sup>6</sup>

Although the total number of deputies per administrative division was fixed by law, since the distribution of mandates was at the disposal of the local authorities in the given division examples of very wide discrimination are found up to the middle 1920's. In some cities representation was allotted on the basis of one deputy per 50 workers in factories, one per 100 Red Army men, one deputy per 200 other employees. In some cities the ratio might be one deputy per 50 soldiers, one per 100 members of trade unions, and one per 200 non-organized workers. In Nizhni-Novgorod in 1924 the ratio was one per 100 workers and soldiers, one per 200 non-organized voters. The extreme seems to be represented by Penza with one deputy per 200 voters in enterprises and unions, and one per 1000 non-organized voters.<sup>7</sup> Only with the increasing uniformity of central and local rules was this tendency in urban soviet elections eliminated. In the preparations for the 1928-29 campaign, gubernia (provincial) electoral commissions were still submitting for approval by the central electoral commission of the RSFSR norms of representation which were designed to weight the composition of city soviets with organized workmen at the expense of unorganized groups of the populace. For example, one proposal suggested one deputy for 150

voters from unions of production workers; one deputy per 400 voters from unions of non-production workers; one deputy per 200 Red Army electors; one deputy per 400 electors from non-organized groups of the population counting only those who actually presented themselves at the electoral assembly to vote.<sup>8</sup> Not only did the central authorities have to restrain the zeal of local authorities for putting bench workers on soviets, but they kept a wary eye on efforts to put too high a percentage of Communist party members in the elected bodies. The reasons were perfectly simple: "The basic rule for party leadership of the broad mass of workers and peasants is to preserve tight connection with the non-party masses and such a proportion of representation in the organs of power--soviets, co-operatives, trade unions, and other social organizations--as will give the non-party persons a sufficient amount of participation. A disproportionate increase in the number of Communists in the soviets is incorrect and politically harmful. It may lead to cutting off the Communists from the masses, and to the incorrect representation of the soviets before the workers and peasants as organs in which only Communists participate."<sup>9</sup>

### Popular Participation--the Franchise

If the electoral law lacked precision in defining the parcelling out of representation to the soviets, it was somewhat more elaborate in stating who might be deprived of the privilege of voting. The republic constitutions declared that all persons of the working classes in town and country (the privilege was not restricted to citizens) eighteen years of age and over might vote and be elected unless deprived by law of electoral rights. The general exclusion covered persons in two categories: those who hire labor with the purpose of extracting profit, and those who live on income not derived from personal labor or who are engaged in trade. In addi-

tion there were many specific exclusions: landholders who hire labor; persons who operate private enterprises; persons who let machines or work animals; artisans who hire labor, proprietors of industrial-type enterprises; private traders; former employees of certain imperial services, particularly the police; and all religious cult personnel.<sup>10</sup> Pending the complete socialization of the soviet economy and society the groups so excluded existed on sufferance, at least during the period of the NEP.

As a matter of administrative practice, however, exceptions to the exclusion clauses were necessary. This became increasingly true as time passed, the remnants of prerevolutionary enemies disappeared, and once undesirable groups were absorbed into the socialist sector of soviet life. If a member of a trade union were deprived of the right to vote under one of the exclusion clauses he might appeal to the central electoral commission for enfranchisement. Originally such appeal had to be supported by evidence that the trade union member had ceased to practice the disenfranchising activity for a period of five years. In 1927 the rule was modified to permit members of unions in deprived categories to appeal to the krai\* or oblast (or comparable level of authority) executive committee, on certification of the local electoral commission, instead of to the central electoral commission.<sup>11</sup>

The disenfranchising prohibition against those hiring labor required constant interpretation. If a peasant were ill at harvest time he might hire labor for the harvest. A person normally engaged in agricultural activity might hire labor, if necessary, to work his farm while he served in elective office. In general labor might be hired for extraor-

---

\*The krai is a territorial administrative unit generally found in areas of relatively sparse population. Its boundaries are usually quite extensive, but its level in the hierarchy of administrative divisions is equivalent to that of the smaller and more densely populated oblast.



dinary work beyond the individual peasant's capacity, within a limitation of two men per day and one hundred work days per season. If the families of factory workers who had agricultural allotments needed to hire a replacement for agricultural work, this might be done without disenfranchising the employers. Artisans were permitted to hire apprentices, but were limited to two.<sup>12</sup>

The prohibition against living on unearned income or by trade also was open to exception. Since it was state policy to encourage saving and the accumulation of desperately needed capital, persons receiving interest from soviet state loans were not disenfranchised if such interest was not the principal source of income. In 1928 this restriction was modified to the effect that persons living on savings in government savings banks were not to be disenfranchised if they were otherwise eligible.<sup>13</sup> Professional persons might in effect be engaged in private enterprise, but they were not disqualified if they were doing socially useful work, even if they were not on the staff of the state or some social organization. When persons were primarily engaged in agricultural work certain other subsidiary occupations--such as the production of honey or dairy products--might be followed without loss of vote.<sup>14</sup> If, because of physical disability for other work, a person engaged in trade under a special license procurable from the central executive committee and the council of people's commissars of the USSR he was entitled to vote.

Even in the case of the specifically counterrevolutionary disenfranchised groups exceptions were possible. Although members of the White armies in the civil war were excluded from the franchise as a group, persons who had been draftees in the White armies might vote. This exception was not considered capable of being extended to officers in any case. Technical or other personnel employed by a religious institution were not deprived of voting rights if not assisting in the cult--a stonemason hired for repairing buildings, for example. In general, fully self-supporting members of a family whose head was deprived of the

vote, even though composing a single household, were not disenfranchised.<sup>15</sup>

The local soviets maintained a file of information about people within their jurisdiction, as a more or less permanent registration. From this information the electoral commissions compiled for any given election a list of those entitled to vote and also a list of those deprived of the franchise. These lists were published by the commissions twenty days before the election of the soviet concerned.<sup>16</sup> Each elector entitled to vote received an individual notice, as will be seen in connection with the actual electoral assembly. Those who were deprived of the franchise must be so deprived on the basis of documentary evidence, which was kept on file by the local soviet for examination by the electoral commission. In the case of those disenfranchised for the hiring of labor a report from the finance department served, and record of income tax payment for those deprived of voting privileges on the basis of living from unearned income. Copies of court orders indicated deprivation for mental incapacity or conviction in criminal action.<sup>17</sup>

The importance of the deprivation of voting rights was not entirely that hostile groups such as former intelligentsia might use votes against the soviet regime--numerically all disenfranchised groups were small--but that the right to vote and to be elected were inseparable. The policy of depriving bourgeois elements of the right to vote (and be elected) because they would be obstructionist was simply part of a broader program of defending the governing interests of the working classes as a whole. Persons or groups were deprived of any right, economic, social or political, which might be employed to the detriment of the socialist revolution.<sup>18</sup> In fact the principle consequence of deprivation of franchise was that the person deprived was publicly stigmatized as socially undesirable and subject to discrimination in every respect.

Complaints about the deprivation of voting rights--or inclusion on the voting list of persons who should have been disenfranchised--went through the electoral commissions.

In 1925 the RSFSR supreme court quashed a decision originating in a local people's court to enfranchise a person who had applied to the court for redress; the ground cited by the supreme court was that questions of electoral right were entirely within the jurisdiction of the administrative hierarchy.<sup>19</sup>

The weakness of the statutes on deprivation was that a considerable degree of local interpretation was required. Curious anomalies sometimes developed as a result. For example, in one rural district with a population of 5000, forty percent were excluded. The Tartar inhabitants were traditionally small tradesmen, whose turnover exceeded the limit of five rubles per month which was the standard set to determine persons engaged in trade. Even the rural proletariat (batraki), which was a particular pet of the central leadership, was sometimes excluded. At a general meeting of electors in a village of Barabinskii okrug (western Siberia) all the batraki were excluded on the basis that they did not belong to the toiling masses; in the words of the simple-minded local reporter, "the batrak does not have his own plot of land, and has no horse--in a word, is of the non-working element."<sup>20</sup> On the other hand there were also instances of persons not excluded who should have been. On one occasion when the electoral commission in Astrakhan received from the finance department the report of traders, proprietors and industrialists, it was discovered that no proprietors had been included on the list of persons deprived of the vote. The big proprietors transferred to their wives, the husband was subsequently listed as a proletarian, thereby enfranchising his family.<sup>21</sup>

Local option also meant that local understanding of the objectives of soviet society might determine the exercise of electoral rights. The volost\* in Riazan gubernia which dis-

---

\*The volost was a small rural district intermediate between village and uezd--the latter being a subdivision of a gubernia--carried over from the imperial administration. Be-

enfranchised about thirty percent of the teachers as belonging to the spiritual ("dukhovnyi," i. e. clerical, element was specifically disenfranchised in the law) ranks was probably overzealous in catering to local prejudice.<sup>22</sup> Guilt by association is clear in the case of those deprived because they frequently visited the homes of peasants on the disenfranchised list. There were such curiosities as disenfranchisement of the aged for incapacity to work, and even for blindness.<sup>23</sup> In Cheliabinsk province a kulak was not deprived, although he had tractors and other machines, because he contributed to industrialization. And to quote our simple western Siberian peasants of Barabinskii province again, a kulak who employed four laborers was not deprived on the ground that "while it is true he is a kulak, he never does any harm."<sup>24</sup> Such a low level of comprehension of the ideological warfare to improve class consciousness was not acceptable in the era of the five year plans.

The question of disenfranchising for excessive subsidiary enterprise, that is, drawing the line between legitimate supplementary income and illegitimate exploitation, became an increasingly difficult administrative problem with the growing complexity and productivity of the economy. Cases were reported in White Russia where persons were deprived of voting privileges on the basis that they let for school use half of their cabins, although they worked for wages almost the year round as timber cutters for a sovkhos. At the same time there were not a few instances where actual "exploiters," genuine kulaks, let furnished premises to enterprises or to lodgers and acquired capital which was "not

---

fore the adoption of the 1936 constitution the volost and uезд had given place to the raion, the typical soviet rural territorial administrative district. The term gubernia for a provincial unit was also abandoned in favor of oblast. The presumption was that the new raion and oblast were rational economic units as well as administrative subdivisions, in contrast to the historical volost, uезд, and gubernia.

noticed." These persons were not individually subject to certain agricultural taxes, the payment of which constituted a legal disqualification; as a consequence kulaks not only voted but were elected to soviets and became obstructionist elements.<sup>25</sup>

Because of considerable variations in local standards a single instruction on permissible rates of income from subsidiary occupations for the entire union could not be set at the center. The electoral instructions issued for 1930, when wholesale changes in the economy were in progress, therefore contained much more complicated provisions for distinguishing between kulaks and middle peasants, and the executive committees of local soviets were charged with the responsibility of fixing very precisely the determining rates of income for the locality. The basis was to be the agricultural tax on individuals. When a person systematically let premises at a rate of income which, if received from agricultural production, would put him into the category of individual payer of consolidated agricultural tax, this was the sign of a kulak.<sup>26</sup> The tax base varied from one agricultural region to another, of course.

In the 1926 instructions those who let land, orchards and vineyards to others for exploitation were lumped together as a class living on unearned income. The 1930 instructions had to be more detailed and provide for the changes taking place in general productive relationships in the village with the exodus of people to work in industry. Persons who let land under conditions which appeared to the raion tax commission to be one-sided were disenfranchised. This applied to cases in which advantage was taken of the legal permission to let land in districts not yet completely collectivized in order to derive income from the poorer peasants; leases often contained terms clearly disadvantageous to the latter. But each individual case had to be examined locally; no blanket condemnation was made of persons who let land.<sup>27</sup> If, however, the letting of orchards and vineyards was not on such terms as to give the lessors an income equivalent to that which, if earned from agriculture, would

subject the individual to a disqualifying agricultural tax in that locality, there was no deprivation of vote.<sup>28</sup> Obviously local discretion under these instructions largely defined--for voting purposes, and hence general legal classification--who was or was not a kulak.

So long as the survival of remnants of class differentiation was officially recognized, instructions could not logically be drawn without admitting that the correct interpretation of external acts depended upon the social position of the person involved. There were, for example, cases in the villages where two householders each year let furnished quarters for the summer for equal or practically equal rent. But in the one instance the proprietor had such a flourishing farm that already he had begun to stick roots into other work and grow into an "exploiter," and easily turned over one or two rooms for summer renting. In the other instance the proprietor moved to the barn for the summer and let his winter cabin. He needed the income to keep his farm solvent; otherwise he would fall under the influence of some predatory kulak.<sup>29</sup>

### Popular Participation--Nominating

At the point where the electoral process moved from the enfranchisement of voters to the nomination of candidates, popular participation became somewhat unreal, since the procedures for selecting candidates for elective office were controlled directly or indirectly by official--or better--party channels. The strength or passivity of the local party organization affected how much of a role local organizations actually had in the naming of suitable persons for candidacy. Formal nomination actually took place in the electoral assembly at the time of election, but preparations for the election day in fact included the public discussion and advance choice of nominees. An inseparable part of any election, therefore, was the series of electors' meetings at which

incumbent deputies reported, public discussion was held, and resolutions of support or censure on the actions of deputies were adopted.

The pre-election campaign was no haphazard affair, nor were electors' meetings something to be lightly treated. Periodic reports from local boards were required by the republic central executive committee during the course of the campaign, and detailed instructions were issued as to what information was desired in the reports.<sup>30</sup> The specific requests were conceived in a manner well calculated to tap the pulse of local opinion. When instructions to deputies were made at electors' meetings, what individuals or groups sponsored the motion? What amendments were proposed and by whom? What percent of eligible voters reported at the meetings; what part was taken by which groups; what was the reaction to speeches of party members; of non-party persons; what aspects of soviets' work evoked most attention? What faults were noted in the work of soviets; specify which social groups had complaints to make? In complaints on the membership and work of electoral commissions, on the administration of which questions, precisely, were complaints based? Were there discussions in pre-election meetings of potential candidates for soviets; by whom and how were the names put forward; what was the reaction of different social groups to proposed candidates, particularly to candidates advanced by party cells, by trade unions, by assemblies of poor peasants, and of women? In cases of challenge to or failure of Communists or Komsomols what motives were brought out? How energetically did individual groups defend their candidates? What clashes of interest between different social groups developed, and how were they expressed--give characteristic examples? Give examples of resolutions introduced? How many poor and middle peasants--and even kulaks (1928)--participated, and on what points in the meetings did their interest appear to be concentrated? On whose initiative were meetings called?<sup>31</sup>

In short, the pre-election campaign was intended to

provide machinery for surveying the part taken by all strata of the population, their interests and how those interests were expressed, with whom they sided, and above all who showed initiative. Systematically followed, the process enabled higher authorities to know in advance what results might be expected at election time, to smoke out the chief contenders and test the strength of public reaction so that steps might be taken to secure certain results rather than others. In this way, by the time the election meeting itself occurred either the candidates unacceptable to the party could be persuaded to withdraw, or the party could back the strongest candidate. A far greater show of unanimity or of solidarity between party and populace would be presented than if the actual process of making choices took place at the electoral assembly. By and large the element of choice between competing candidacies was small on election day.

Neither local, nor republic, nor union instructions fully regulated publication of the names of proposed candidates in advance of the electoral assembly, that is, the meeting of voters at which deputies to soviets were elected. Practice varied, but the usual requirement was announcement of lists of candidates to be proposed one or two days before the date of the elections.<sup>32</sup> The electoral law itself provided that formal nomination, i. e. official presentation of a candidate's name at the electoral assembly, could be made by any group or by any individual voter participating in the assembly.<sup>33</sup> In practice, apparently, by the later years of this system's operation, the advance preparation was so well coordinated that the lists of candidates sponsored by the trade union, the party cell, or other local organizations, all contained the same names, in a number corresponding to the vacancies to be filled. The lists were typed in advance and posted on a board provided for the purpose at the meeting place of the electoral assembly, and individual nominations disappeared.<sup>34</sup>



### Election Boards and Electoral Assemblies

The preparation of registration lists, notification of voters, and holding of electoral assemblies was the direct responsibility of electoral commissions. The composition of these commissions was therefore of considerable importance in getting the desired results from the public elements of the electoral system. Early official instructions contained only general stipulations about the representation of social organizations on electoral commissions, and during the semi-tolerance of the NEP period the lack of organization showed in the election results. In a report to the central executive committee in July, 1926, for example, V. I. Molotov pointed out some of the unsatisfactory developments traceable to lack of precise organizational instructions. There had been, said Molotov, a noticeable rise in the part played by non-organized, proletarian, semi-small-bourgeois strata, in comparison with the part played by party and other proletarian organizations in workers' districts. Consequently the quota of the former had increased in the representation in the city soviets; this fact deserved special attention, particularly in the case of city soviets where there was not a significant proletarian segment in the population.<sup>35</sup> The new law of 1926 was therefore quite precise as to the nature of electoral commissions, and their representative composition became one of the chief exhibits in the soviet claims anent the democratic character of their electoral processes.

In organizing the system of electoral commissions for any campaign the procedure was to start at the top and work down. The republic central electoral commission was formed by the central executive committee of the republic. In the RSFSR, gubernia, krai, and oblast electoral commissions were set up by the corresponding level executive committees. The president of a gubernia, krai or oblast electoral commission, however, was nominated by the central electoral com-

mission and approved by the presidium of the republic central executive committee. The lower commission might not have any member which the higher commission considered unfit, but the higher commission had only the right to challenge, not the right to approve, individual members other than the president.<sup>36</sup> Moving down to the next level, the uezd or corresponding administrative division executive committee established the electoral commission, but the commission's president was appointed, on nomination of the gubernia electoral commission, by the gubernia executive committee. And so with the volost electoral commission; its president was nominated by the uezd commission and approved by the uezd executive committee; the city electoral commission was subordinated in the same way to whatever administrative division had jurisdiction (in the case of larger cities, the republic itself), and the electoral commission for rural soviets was similarly related to the volost commission.<sup>37</sup> After the administrative reform of the early 1930's the structure was simplified into a general pattern of oblast-raion-rural soviet subordination, but the method of choosing electoral commissions was not altered by this more streamlined structure. In areas where the gubernia or oblast structure did not exist there were modifications in the pattern, but the method was still that of having the electoral commission organized by the executive committee, with the president nominated and approved by the next higher electoral commission and executive committee. In the Transcaucasian Federation the uezd electoral commission and the city electoral commission were both directly below the republic central electoral commission, which nominated the presidents of the lower commissions for the approval of the presidium of the republic central executive committee.<sup>38</sup>

After the complaints in 1926 that past election campaigns had been sluggishly conducted owing to the failure of the organizations represented to take an energetic part, the law specified the number and distribution of representatives on electoral commissions. Gubernia, krai or oblast electoral

commissions consisted of eleven members, as follows:

- President (nominated by the central electoral commission and approved by the presidium of the republic central executive committee)
- 10 members approved by the gubernia, krai or oblast executive committee, i. e.,
- 2 representatives of gubernia, krai or oblast executive committee
  - 1 representative from the trade union council
  - 1 representative from the Komsomol
  - 1 representative from the Communist party
  - 1 representative for city soviets
  - 1 representative for national minorities
  - 1 representative from Red Army
  - 2 representatives from committees of peasant mutual aid societies.

The uezd electoral commissions consisted of a president and eight or nine members, as follows:

- President (nominated by gubernia, krai or oblast electoral commission and approved by gubernia, krai or oblast executive committee, in RSFSR). In the case of republics, like the Transcaucasian Federation, in which there was no gubernia level, the central electoral commission nominated and the republic central executive committee approved the president.
- 8 members approved by the uezd executive committee, i. e.,
- 1 representative from the uezd executive committee
  - 1 representative from the local bureau of trade unions
  - 1 representative from city soviet
  - 1 representative from Komsomol
  - 1 representative from Communist party
  - 1 representative for national minorities
  - 2 representatives from peasant mutual aid societies.

If units of the Red Army or Navy were stationed in the ter-

ritory the Transcaucasian Federation provided an additional representative, and the RSFSR permitted the substitution of a representative of the Red Army or Navy in place of one of the two peasant representatives.

In the volosts of the RSFSR, and corresponding level of territorial subdivision in other republics, the distribution was as follows:

- President (nominated by the uezd electoral commission and approved by the uezd executive committee)
- 6 members approved by the volost executive committee, i. e.,
  - 2 representatives of the volost executive committee
  - 1 representative of the local bureau of trade unions
  - 1 representative of the Komsomol
  - 2 representatives of peasant societies for mutual aid.

In addition to these members, which made up the seven member commission in the RSFSR, the corresponding commission in the Transcaucasian Federation had:

- 1 representative from an assembly of delegates of the peasantry
- 1 representative for national minorities
- 1 representative for the Red Army or Navy  
(if any units stationed in the area).

It will be noted that at the volost level the Communist party ceases to be directly represented as an organization, although it was very likely to be represented by the fact that one of the other groups represented would have as its delegate a party member. The absence of representation for the party as an organization carries over to all lower level electoral commissions; the Komsomol, however, is represented in all.

The lack of representation for national minorities in the volost commission in the RSFSR, although such representation continues to appear in the Transcaucasian Federation, probably reflects the relative position of nationalities.

Any considerable non-Russian minority in the RSFSR had some provision made for it in the administrative structure in the form of autonomous republic, region, or oblast, and the presence on uezd electoral commissions of representation if a minority existed in the district. But the preponderant nationality was Russian, and in view of the other provision for national representation it was unlikely that in so small a group as a volost population there would be any significant national minority, either non-Russian, or, in one of the autonomous units of the RSFSR, Russian. The mixture of nationalities in the Transcaucasian Federation was another question. Russians were a national minority and provision for representation of national minorities on the lowest level commissions insured Russian participation.

Finally, even at this comparatively low level in the hierarchy, in the administrative unit which is essentially rural, the peasants are heavily underrepresented unless the president, executive committee members, and Kom-somol representatives happen to be peasants. One of the tasks specifically assigned to the volost electoral commissions, and primarily to the trade union member, was to see that the rural proletariat, sovkhoz employees, village poor and like groups played an active part in the election. "On them," states the soviet commentator, "falls an extraordinarily serious responsibility."<sup>39</sup> It was at the volost level that the first results of indirect selection of delegates to the higher congresses of soviets would appear, out of the least socialized sector of the population.

The composition of the rural electoral commission, which along with the city electoral commission made up the primary unit in the system, consisted of seven members in the RSFSR. The following breakdown for the Transcaucasian Federation only adds one (or in occasional instances two) to the basic pattern of the RSFSR commission:

President (nominated by the volost--in the RSFSR--or equivalent administrative unit electoral commission and approved by the corresponding executive committee)

7 or 8 members approved by the same executive committee, i. e.,

- 2 representatives for the rural soviet
- 1 representative for the trade union bureau (N. B. in a rural administrative division)
- 1 representative for the Komsomol
- 2 representatives for peasant mutual aid societies
- 1 representative from assembly of peasant delegates
- 1 representative for the Red Army or Navy if units stationed in the area.

Such a commission was frankly expected to see that elections were conducted in the interests of proletarian democracy, in accordance with the all-union central executive committee resolution of July 20, 1926.

The city electoral commissions were made up of seven members:

President (In the RSFSR, nominated by the electoral commission of the administrative division to which the given city was subordinated, and approved by the corresponding executive committee; in the Transcaucasian Federation, nominated by the central electoral commission and approved by the presidium of the central executive committee of the republic)

6 members

- 2 representatives for the city soviet
- 1 representative for the trade union council
- 1 representative for the Komsomol
- 1 representative for the Red Army or Navy
- 1 representative elected by a city wide assembly of delegates of women workers, in the RSFSR; elected by a city wide assembly of delegates of non-organized workers, women, and national minorities, in the Transcaucasian Federation.

The RSFSR instructions provided that a subordinate commission might be set up for the non-organized electors of the

city. Where a well-known number of a national minority was present in a city it might be provided that one of the representatives for the soviet be from the minority.

The main function of the higher electoral commissions, other than those already indicated, was one of supervision and direction to provide the lower units with the necessary information and instruction for the conduct of elections. They were responsible for the observance of legality and in case of infraction of the law by a lower commission the higher could bring action for annulment of the election involved. Instead of any blanket extension of electoral rights by a general law, the electoral commissions were given the power under the electoral instructions for 1927 to decide (samostoiatelno reshata) the question of granting electoral rights if the applicant could not be excluded for hiring labor, or of withholding electoral rights from former workers who relapsed into non-productive or non-socialized work. It was all the more necessary, under these instructions, that electoral commissions of higher rank provide for the lower the direct day by day leadership without which it would not be possible to achieve the desired results.<sup>40</sup>

The primary units of the electoral commissions had very concrete functions:

1. Establish, verify, and publish lists of those deprived of electoral rights, and examine complaints.

2. Distribute by mail official notice of election to each person entitled to vote. This went out five days before the election, with statement of time and place of electoral assembly, and bore a serial number which corresponded to the number for the voter's name on the commission's electoral list.<sup>41</sup>

3. Lay out precincts; that is, assign the number of mandates per electoral assembly.

4. Organize the electoral assemblies.

5. Delegate members, or name additional commissioners to act in its behalf, if required, as presiding officers for each electoral assembly.<sup>42</sup>

At the conclusion of the campaign the commission turned over all its business correspondence to the executive com-

mittee of the soviet by which the commission had been established. The next higher ranking commission gave a final report to the corresponding executive committee on the results of the election and the dismissal of the lower commission.

The way in which the composition of electoral boards was weighted for the job at hand is illustrated by figures for the 1928-29 campaign, when the country was being mobilized for the complete socialization of soviet society. The representative character, in so far as the socialist organizations of the country (and these had been developing in the twenties as mass organizations) were concerned has been indicated. The class and party composition is reflected in the following averages for the USSR:<sup>43</sup>

#### Rural Electoral Commissions

Workers	4.2%	Women	14%
Rural proletariat (batraki)	6.5%	Communist party	
Poor peasants	46.6%	and Komsomol	24%
Middle peasants	38.5%		
Others	4.2%		
	100 0		

#### Urban Electoral Commissions

Workers (rabochie)	55%	Women	22%
Employees (sluzhashchie)	28%	Communist party	62%
Intelligentsia	2%	Komsomol	10%
Artisans (kustarei)	1%		
Housekeepers (dom. khoz.)	2%		
Red Army or Navy men	4%		
Others	8%		
	100		

The notable difference between the percentage of party and Komsomol members who served on electoral commissions for rural soviets and for urban soviets seems to show clearly that there were not only not enough party members



to go around but that they were concentrated in urban districts. Until the program of the five year plans the rural areas had less relative importance in the socialized sector of the economy; the extent to which local electoral commissions and local soviets reflect the local social scene probably gives some index of the degree of local autonomy in the management of affairs that did not trench on the basic policy-making prerogative of the central authorities.

The electoral assembly was the plenary session of voters at which formal nomination and final election took place. The number of such assemblies held in the territory administered by any given soviet was determined by the electoral commission, which also allotted, if more than one assembly was held in the territory of a single soviet, the number of deputies each assembly would select. The action of the assembly was definitive; where there were several in one soviet's territory they did not all choose complete rosters for the soviet, with election dependent upon a collation of results and selection of the candidates with the highest pluralities. In urban areas the assemblies were organized according to producing or trade union units. They were held on a work day, and the voters participating were paid for the time at their regular rates. If not employed at a place of election, a voter had to be released by his employer for the time of the election and paid at his average wage for the released time.<sup>44</sup> Non-organized voters were either invited to the assembly in some enterprise or union, or to separate assemblies organized for them on a territorial basis. In a large enterprise there could be several assemblies, organized by department or by shift, in which case each such department or shift had its own list of candidates and its quota of deputies to elect. In other words, it was not necessary--in fact it was impracticable with voting scheduled at place of employment during working hours--for all electoral assemblies in a single soviet's territory to be held simultaneously. Plural voting was theoretically possible; a worker might vote with his shift at the mill and with his trade union. Double voting was specifically interdicted in the Ukrainian

Soviet Socialist Republic,<sup>45</sup> which suggests the phenomenon had occurred. Given the practice of sending individual election notices by mail to voters, however, the use of these notices as identification at the electoral assembly, and proper care in compilation of lists by the electoral commission to begin with, double voting was unlikely. More likely was the qualitative, rather than the quantitative influence of workers' plural associations. In the compilation of candidates' lists during the pre-campaign period a name popular with the workers would appear both as a shop nominee and a trade union nominee.

In rural areas a single assembly of voters was held at the central populated point unless the district administered by the soviet was unusually extensive or populous. In the latter event precincts on a territorial basis might be established. If a well-defined national minority existed it might be constituted a separate precinct.<sup>46</sup>

Electoral assemblies were opened by the commissioner designated by the electoral commission for the purpose.<sup>47</sup> A presidium of three members from the assembly was elected by it to conduct the meeting, the commissioner serving as president of such presidium. There was also a secretary, chosen by the assembly. The commissioner explained the law and proceeded to check the number of electors upon which the assembly was based, and the number of voters actually present. For this purpose a copy of the electoral commission's list of registered voters was provided and those present were identified as qualified voters by presentation of their notice of election meeting. A quorum of thirty-five percent of the qualified voters was necessary for a legal election. Should the meeting fail of a quorum a minute to that effect was entered and a new meeting was required.<sup>48</sup> Having established a quorum of qualified voters the presidium announced the candidates, individually or by lists depending upon how they were presented, together with the sponsoring organizations or individuals from whom the proposed nominations had been received. The electoral commission itself, or its agents, was forbidden by the law to advance lists

or individual candidates. The assembly had the privilege of deciding whether voting should be done by list or by candidate, by open vote. If the decision was for voting by list, this did not preclude the removal of individual names on the lists.

The order of business consisted of four items: election of deputies, election of alternates, election of the revision commission,<sup>49</sup> election of revision commission alternates. These items had to be conducted separately and alternates had to be elected individually, not by list. The protocol of the assembly's proceedings was signed by the members of the presidium; it provided full information as to candidates proposed by the party organ, by other organizations, and by the assembly itself, with the record of the number for and against each candidate. The names of those elected must show a majority of the voters present.<sup>50</sup>

When the election was completed complaints about the proceedings might be submitted during a period of one week, and reviewed by the electoral commission within three days of receipt. The record of such cases of complaint, together with the local electoral commission's report on the election itself, then went to the next higher commission. The report not only contained all of the data on voting for candidates referred to but a detailed description of the proceedings; what order of voting was followed, what changes were proposed and by what groups of electors, how the votes were counted. In the event that the election was annulled in whole or in part, as to any member or any precinct, and new elections were held, a new electoral commission was set up for the purpose. The competence of the electoral commission therefore was determined by the results.

The weight of the evidence supports the contention of the soviet writers that the decisive question in elections was the presentation of the correct candidates. The machinery was not designed for open contest at the election. Although the report of the proceedings of electoral assemblies by the electoral commissions was supposed to relate any evidences of administrative pressure, the system was so

designed as to favor the candidates of well-organized and politically sapient groups. The Communist party monopolized the qualifications. Nothing so complicated as a formal printed ballot was ever presented to voters for their confusion. The public nature of voting in a society accustomed to the nuances of pressure--by somebody or other--was not conducive to electoral contest when the state organization had a known willingness to use police and administrative coercion. If poor candidates were presented they discredited the whole proceeding by their action in office. If unpopular candidates were presented they were revealed by public reaction in the pre-electoral campaign, or by the passive resistance of abstaining voters. And yet there was always the insistence that proletarian democracy must be displayed by not "appointing" candidates to the soviet.<sup>51</sup>

### Congresses of Soviets

Local organs of state power between the primary rural or urban soviets and the republic congress, as already indicated, were not popularly elected and represent only a minor aspect of electoral procedure. At the organizational meeting of each newly elected soviet, the election of delegates to the congresses of soviets was the first item on the order of business, following the report of the electoral commission and the selection of the soviet's executive organs. The existing executive committee continued in office until the election of a new one and convened the newly elected soviet following the election of deputies.

For rural soviets one order of delegates was elected--to the congress of whatever administrative division had jurisdiction in the republic concerned (volost, uezd, raion, etc.). The urban soviet, however, in accordance with the favoritism of the original RSFSR constitution, not only elected delegates to the next higher administrative division (uezd, or other, depending upon the importance of the city). Urban soviets also

elected delegates to the republic and the union congresses, to which their representation was direct, while that of the rural soviets was indirect.

A protocol of the election of congress delegates, similar in form to that for the election of deputies to soviets, was prepared, showing candidates proposed, votes for and against. In this instance the soviet rather than the hierarchy of electoral commissions conducted the election and sent the report to the congress; the same procedure applied for each congress that sent delegates to a higher level congress. The record must also show the population of the district and the norm for representation used per delegate.<sup>52</sup> Each congress of soviets elected its own mandate commission which had the responsibility of verifying the legality of the election of the delegates in the given congress, and no business was in order except the selection of presiding officials until after the mandate commission's report was adopted.<sup>53</sup>

### A Review of Results

In surveying the results achieved under the indirect elections of the period of the first USSR constitution one factor stands out: the percentage of qualified voters who did not participate. "We cannot pride ourselves in the fact that only fifty percent of the people participate in elections." observed one writer in 1928.<sup>54</sup> Except for certain common factors of this kind, comparison of the overall results of different campaigns is sometimes difficult, since the data compiled by the central electoral commission varied from one campaign to another. This appears not so much as a willful attempt to make comparison impossible or to conceal information as a change in emphasis from year to year. During a period of rapid development and a search for standards one set of statistics might seem more important than another in different campaigns. In reporting the 1924-25 campaign, for example, a heavy emphasis was placed in

the urban soviet elections on data concerning trade union participation: which unions were active, and how active.<sup>55</sup> In earlier election campaigns much stress was laid upon the age groups into which deputies could be divided, their prerevolutionary status, and whether they were elected for their first term or were re-elected. During the later twenties the participation of women in the elections and as deputies was being emphasized, since their percentages were very low.

Tabulations of results underline the very low percentage of participation and the very heavy concentration of the Communist party in urban soviets for the 1924-25 campaign. In elections to rural soviets an overwhelming majority (91%) of uyezds reported less than 50% of eligible voters participated, and returned 80-90% non-party members as deputies.<sup>56</sup> Curiously enough the form used for reporting elections in rural areas still had a column under the section "party affiliation" for "members of other parties,"<sup>57</sup> but I have seen no percentage, even fractional, for that designation later than 1922.<sup>58</sup> In rural areas the percentage of the population of voting age formally deprived of voting rights was 1.6%. The percentage figure was significantly higher in a few sections, but even so the total number of disenfranchised persons involved in those sections was only about 50,000.

Regions reporting highest percentages of disenfranchised voters in rural areas in 1924-25

Region	Percent of population of voting age disenfranchised
Amur	4.5
Trans-Baikal	6.3
Primorsk	4.0
Buriat-Mongolian ASSR	4.3
Crimean ASSR	4.7

Basis of disenfranchisement (rural population), 1924-25

Merchants and middlemen	22.7%
Clergy	18.7%
Persons with court convictions carrying deprivation of voting rights	10.2%
Persons living on unearned income	7.4%
(Balance divided among a number of smaller categories)	

The total of participation (rural soviets) was 28.9% of the eligible voters. Participation by men ran at the rate of 47.8%, by women 10%.<sup>59</sup> Only in very rare instances did a rural soviet represent only one inhabited place; the exceptions reported in the 1924-25 data under discussion were all in an autonomous SSR or an autonomous oblast. Taking the rural area as a whole 88% of deputies elected were non-party, 91.7% were peasants, and 92.1% were men.<sup>60</sup> The presidents of rural soviets still rather closely reflected the peasant, non-party composition of the rural soviets: 99.6% were men; 94.4% had been peasants before the revolution, and 94.6% were presently peasants; 82% had a lower school education only, and of the remaining 18% only 1.8% had a middle or higher school education, the balance having insufficient education to classify. Non-party persons comprised 75.5% of presidents of rural soviets, and 55.5% had served in the Red Army.<sup>61</sup>

The peasant and non-party character of congresses and executive officers began to change radically at the volost level, however.<sup>62</sup> In 1924-25 non-party persons made up 73% of volost congress delegates, 38.6% of volost executive committee members, and only 9.2% of presidents of volost executive committees. Peasants comprised 81% of delegates, 70% of executive committee members, and 51.4% of presidents of executive committees, at the volost level. It should be noted that members of executive committees were not required to be delegates in the congress. By 1924 over 50% of the presidents were serving for the second or third time and

nearly 70% had served in the Red Army. In general, the percentages regarding participation of men who were war or peacetime service veterans imply that such persons had a sufficiently reliable background in political indoctrination to be encouraged to be active in the soviets.

In the urban elections for 1924-25, 88.9% of all cities reported 50% or lower--in many places much lower--participation by the eligible voters. The only city to report higher than 70% participation was Vyksa in Nizhni-Novgorod gubernia, which had 4,110 electors and returned 62.9% party members and Komsomols.<sup>63</sup> Generally the urban soviets were made up of a majority of party members. Occasional non-party majorities were piled up--70-80% in smaller cities.<sup>64</sup> The averages for participation, social status, and population of voting age formally deprived of the right to vote in urban soviets appear in the following percentages (1924-25 campaign):<sup>65</sup>

Number of eligible voters participating	30.7%
Men	42.0%
Trade union members	42.0%
Women	17.7%
Number of persons of voting age disenfranchised	5.3%
Deputies who were trade union members	76.8%
Deputies who were party and Komsomol members	64.8%

Granting that the Communist party was probably never actually on the verge of losing control, the tabulation of party strength in lower levels of the soviet structure shows an interesting fluctuation. It seems fruitless to debate whether the regime was strong enough, before the middle twenties, to have put any desired percentage of Communist party members into the soviets by any means, regardless of public opinion and political expediency. The party did not operate exclusively by police methods, nor did it ignore expediency and the drift of public opinion. Furthermore,



until after 1928 the total registered membership in the party did not equal the number of deputies annually elected to local soviets. Nor were all Communist party members elected as deputies to some soviet.<sup>66</sup> The increase in the party membership was very rapid at some periods, but between 1922 and 1928, when the party membership trebled, the percentage of party members participating as deputies in soviets showed only small gains, and from 1923 to 1928 declined steadily. It should also be recalled that while strenuous efforts were being made in this period to eliminate openly hostile elements from participation in the soviets the conception of an indivisible bloc of party and non-party Bolsheviks had not yet been consolidated, and deputies considered by party leadership to be undesirables were regularly found in local soviets.

Party alignment (%) in local level soviet organs, 1918-1928<sup>67</sup>

	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1926
Uezd congress								
Communist party	60.6	55.4	43.0	44.0	54.4	62.8	59.9	53.5
Other parties	14.2	4.9	.7	.3	.1			
Non-party	25.2	39.7	56.3	55.7	45.5	37.2	40.1	46.5
Gubernia congress								
Communist party	71.4	79.9	78.6	74.8	78.8	78.1	69.6	64.5
Other parties	14.2	4.7	.2	.1				
Non-party	14.4	15.4	21.2	25.1	21.2	21.9	30.4	35.5

Following the line at the lowest level given, the uezd congress, the percentage of Communist party members declines from 1918 through the civil war years to the beginning of the NEP. In 1922 there is a sharp rise following the concessions announced in the NEP, which continues into 1923 when there were further improvements, stabilization of the currency and the formation of the union. Thereafter a steady decline is evident to the end of the NEP. At the higher level indicated in the chart the line is not quite so clear but similar fluctuations occur in support of the presumption that under

the electoral system of the period there was still some correlation between public opinion and the political complexion of the local state organs.

The revamping of the membership of electoral commissions and the tightening up of the instructions introduced in 1926 seem to have achieved some of the desired results, for there was a progressive increase in the level of participation:<sup>68</sup>

	1926	1927	1929
Number of eligible voters participating, USSR		50.7%	63.2%
Eligible voters participating, rural	48.9%	48.4%	61.8%
Eligible voters participating, urban		59.1%	70.6%
Persons of voting age disenfranchised, rural	1.2%	3.5%	
Persons of voting age disenfranchised, urban		7.7%	
Number of party and Komsomols, rural		13.0%	14.9%
Number of party and Komsomols, urban		50.9%	52.0%
Number of eligible women participating, rural	28.0%	31.1%	48.5%
Number of eligible women participating, urban		49.8%	64.7%

The number of deputies elected to local soviets was enormous. For 1927 urban soviets elected 110,115 deputies, rural soviets 1,315,768. The number of delegates to volost and raion congresses alone was 373,606.<sup>69</sup> The numbers involved in a single large province, Leningrad oblast, show a pattern that corresponds fairly closely to the union averages and may be used to exemplify the detailed breakdown except for the higher participation of workers in the city of Leningrad with its strong tradition of worker political consciousness.<sup>70</sup>

#### Territorial division of Leningrad oblast

Raions with raion congresses	99
Urban soviets	36
Rural soviets	2,036

These soviets represented a recognized number of inhabited places classified as follows:

Cities	40
Workers' settlements	20
Other urban type settlements	42
Villages (rural settlements of 10 or more inhabitants)	35,458

Percentages of participation by various groups,  
Leningrad oblast and city, in 1929

	Oblast	City
Workers	78.6%	81.5%
Peasants	61.2%	--
Employees	73.2%	73.6%
Others	45.4%	38.7%
Women	50.9%	50.7%
Total number of eligible voters* participating	61.0%	59.7%

Party composition, soviets in Leningrad oblast

Leningrad city soviet	2,204 deputies	74% party and Kom-
Other urban soviets	4,098 deputies	50% somol members
Rural soviets	36,473 deputies	15% (of which nearly half Komsomol)

It may be illuminating to note that there were in 1931 the following party and Komsomol units and members for the region:<sup>71</sup>

	Party cells	Members	Komsomol units	Members
Leningrad, city	1,198	172,305	876	176,543
Leningrad, oblast (excluding city)	2,476	50,402	3,289	86,597

By the middle of the second five year plan the procedure was sufficiently well-oiled and the organizational machinery

so efficient that very impressive results could be obtained in elections. For the last elections held under the old constitution, rural soviet elections began the first of November, 1934, urban elections were underway in the second half of the month, the RSFSR congress met January 5, 1935, and the union congress January 15. The notable increase in participation by the electorate had, in 1934, made of soviet elections a device for mass participation comparable to the increasingly mass character of all social organizations in the union. Statistics for the elections held during the early period of planning are illuminating:<sup>72</sup>

	1929	1930-31	1934
Number of eligible voters participating,	60.7%	69.4%	83%
rural			
urban	70.4%	79.1%	92%
Eligible women voters participating,			
rural	46.9%	61.7%	
urban	64.3%	76.4%	
Eligible voters participating, union average			85%

The total percentage of persons of voting age deprived of voting rights, 1934, was 2.5%, and the total number of eligible voters was approximately 91,000,000.

Probably the spectacular success of the 1934 elections can be attributed primarily to the completion of effective organization and to the visible results of planning. At the end of 1934 there was an impressive amount of new construction, the new model statute for peasant artels had been a contribution toward reconciling the rural populace to the kolkhoz, and the country was on the verge of abolishing rationing. The party had a good record of tangible achievements, relaxation of controls was beginning and the high water mark of economic and political success in the thirties was in sight.

At the Seventh All-Union Congress, early in 1935, plans to amend the constitution were introduced, which led ultimately to a complete overhauling and the new constitution of 1936. The changes proposed in the electoral provisions were

extremely far-reaching; Molotov's report went so far as to support direct popular election not only for all the former congresses, but their executive committees as well, up to and including the central executive committee of the USSR.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, elections were to become equal, ending the weighted representation for the urban population, and secret.

The reasons advanced by Molotov for direct, equal, secret elections suggest that both domestic and foreign conditions may have played a part in the decision to change the constitutional provisions. His report placed great emphasis on the fact that, with equal elections, for the first time in Russian history urban workers and peasants would be joined in a single electoral body. In a period of moderate concession to, and conciliation of, the peasantry the party leadership may well have recognized the importance of making the peasant feel equal. The proposed equality in franchise would be one tangible step in that direction. The change from open to secret elections was advanced as still another way of testing the closeness and effectiveness of the links between the leading elements in the soviet organs and the workers and peasants. Although there were other ways of checking this accord, secret elections would aid in showing up more quickly some of the weak parts in the work of the leading organs.<sup>74</sup> The optimism following the results in the 1934 elections is a little reminiscent of the conditions that inspired Stalin's famous "dizzy with success" warning a few years before. At any rate, in the sequel, the new elections were not permitted to take the form implied in Molotov's report, but, as will be shown, became a different type of referendum.

But the extension of the electoral system through direct, equal and secret voting was not only inspired by home conditions. The USSR was enjoying a new position abroad--a general de jure recognition among the leading countries of the world, and membership in the League of Nations, sitting cheek by jowl with the leading progressive and democratic states of the capitalist world. The bourgeois element was no less evil in soviet eyes than before; in fact

Molotov charged bourgeois states at that very moment with removing the last vestiges of popular electoral rights in their own bailiwicks. He was referring specifically to Germany and Poland, for which there was a good case. But in general he maintained that "if the bourgeoisie in the capitalist countries have now reached the point of spitting on that which is written up in the textbooks and the literature and the social science as the highest achievement of the bourgeois state, i. e., popular elections, the soviet authority carries forward still further the development of the contemporary state and boldly puts popular electoral rights into practice in the interests of the working masses and against exploiters--in the interests of building socialism."<sup>75</sup> The soviet position was that of a very new member of the western European club who, vastly concerned with outward form, was careful to use the proper fork and not to tuck his napkin under his chin.

The Seventh All-Union Congress formally adopted a resolution which called for certain changes in the constitution. A new electoral system, with equal, direct and secret voting, was to be worked out, and it was provided that the next regular elections should be held under the new system.<sup>76</sup> In fact, however, the next elections to be held were for the union soviet, in 1937; the union republic and the autonomous republic soviets were elected in 1938, and not until the end of 1939 were elections again held for local soviets.

## CHAPTER II

### "SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY": THE STALIN

#### CONSTITUTION OF 1936

The new principles in the electoral laws called for by the Seventh All-Union Congress' decree of February 6, 1935, involved a new phase in soviet development, which is described in detail in the 1936 constitution. The era of "proletarian dictatorship" gave way to the era of "socialist democracy." This is not to say that to the untutored foreign observer anything was changed about either the character of party control, or the objectives toward which the party led. But there was much fanfare about having achieved progress toward the goal, and the new constitution, as a registration of that progress, had to be cast in a new mold if it was to give concrete indication of the fact that society had been changed. The original constitution had been written for a society admittedly split into hostile groups. In theory the basically hostile elements had undergone extermination or metamorphosis and there was no longer a society with divided ultimate objectives. Whether or not practice in fact followed this theory, the constitution did, particularly in the electoral provisions.

The old soviet electoral system was frankly based on the idea that not everybody was for the soviet regime. The new system assumed everybody was. The old system was discriminatory, as befitted a period during which, in theory, the proletariat was organized as a dictatorship for the suppression of the non-proletarian elements. With the passing, for practical purposes, of the hostile strata, in theory the excuse for discrimination was removed. To repeat, the quality of the goods may not have been changed, but the window dressing was. Legal discrimination was written out of the new law.

Increasingly complex regulations regarding the deprivation of voting rights had perforce to leave something to local judgment--that of electoral commissions or executive committees--in deciding the stage of socialist development in the community. Centralized control (with the concept of edinonachalie itself), firm definitions, could not logically be carried out. This factor, coupled with the relatively insignificant numbers of the social strata involved, meant a great amount of work for very little result. From the standpoint of administrative expediency alone there was strong justification for the new constitutional provision that every person over the age of eighteen should have the right to vote. With direct elections promised for every level of soviet organization, centralization of procedure was both important to control and incompatible with the flexibility and local option formerly necessary. A universal franchise and a highly regulated procedure removed practically all opportunity for the variations evident in the twenties, and the picture of local elections since the 1936 constitution is one of dragooned discipline.

That the electoral system under "socialist democracy" was changed in form as compared to "proletarian dictatorship" seems patent from a glance at the provisions of the 1936 constitution. Article 134 declared elections to all soviets (these now corresponded to the former local soviets and the various congresses of soviets, and are described earlier in the constitution) by universal, equal and direct suffrage, using secret ballot. Succeeding articles merely defined the basic provisions in detail: Article 135, for example, read "Elections of deputies are universal: all citizens of the USSR\* who have reached the age of eighteen, irrespective of race or nationality, religion, education, domicile, social origin, property status or past activities, have the right to vote in the election of deputies, with the exception of insane persons and persons who have been convicted

---

\*Formerly "All persons..."



by a court of law and whose sentences include deprivation of electoral rights." The completeness of the centralization under the new system, in contrast to the old, is foreshadowed by the fact that it is first in the union constitution that these rights are defined, and the several republic constitutions were adapted to conform.

[Thus the main changes between old and new are the elimination of disenfranchised classes, of indirect elections, and of inequality. /Actually the disenfranchised were negligible in numbers, and the control mechanism was not wholly in the indirectness of the electoral procedure. Control was in the social organizations which were represented in the electoral commissions and which dictated nominations. Direct election did not change this subsidiary structure at all. Taking the new forms alone, however, the electoral laws issued under the new constitution contained every progressive device to insure fair and democratic elections in general use in the West, and more beside, with the exception of proportional representation. The great emphasis on following the letter of the law makes form everything.]

So great has been the stress on changes in form that the possibility of substantive changes may be overlooked. In the earlier periods of soviet development much was entrusted to the machinery of the soviets for want of any other adequate channel of communication. After the development of extensive industrialization and of collectivization in agriculture under total planning, an expanding bureaucracy in a vast network of commissariats (ministries) actually took out of the hands of the soviets the bulk of the country's economic activities. Most of the soviets' responsibility was supervision, stimulation, observation and reporting. The executive committees, and still more the heads of departments under the executive committees, operated even in policy matters on orders coming down an administrative line in a ministerial organization. The elected soviet does not control the departmental operation under its own executive committee because such officials as the head of the finance department, while nominated by the executive committee, are appointed by the

higher level organization--oblast or republic as the case may be. The head of the finance department is responsible to the ministry of finance, need not be a member of the executive committee or the soviet. The centralization in the type of overall planning used left little room for wide policy-making functions at local levels. The soviets had originally been devised as a weapon in class warfare. With the successful conclusion of the internal class struggle a change in substance, if not in form, of the soviets had to result when the social environment changed unless a decentralization of authority should give the soviets a real policy-making or directing role. When this was not done the soviets developed under the new election system as a form of combined public honor and public relations agency. The new form of election was well adapted to the new type of soviet.

There is evidence that when the new constitution was introduced the intention was to go all the way to the western European extreme in electoral practice and permit contests in elections. The celebrated interview between Roy Howard and Stalin in 1936 in which Stalin predicted very spirited electoral contests is probably the most famous. There was also the wording of the new election law with regard to ballots--an innovation in the soviet system, since the old open elections had required no formally printed ballot. The instructions stated that the voter was to cross out the names of all candidates on the ballot except the one for which he wished to vote. Perhaps even more convincing is the testimony of competent foreign observers resident in the soviet union at the time the new constitution and electoral law was adopted--such as John N. Hazard. Professor Hazard states that "everybody thought election contests were intended," and the same impression used to be conveyed by the late Samuel N. Harper.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, one ex-member of a soviet avers that in his district contests did develop prior to the elections of 1937 (for the union soviet, the first held under the new constitution) and were summarily ended by intervention of the political police.<sup>2</sup> Why?

Whether because of overconfidence or, more probably,

justifiable misapprehension of the results of economic success, the program went too far. It must not be assumed that because Communist party leaders talked in terms of concepts familiar to western Europe and America, using the very language of political institutions in those areas, the soviet leaders really knew what they were talking about. Nowhere is there the slightest indication that there was any intention on the part of the Communist party to share political authority with others. Quite the contrary; the actual position of the Communist party in the country, holding a monopoly of political activity, was formalized in the 1936 constitution (Article 126). Freely contested popular elections, on the basis of direct, universal, equal suffrage by secret ballot--in which the results were accepted peaceably by all concerned even if they went against the party in power--were wholly outside the personal experience of the principal Communist party leaders, particularly Stalin. The only Russian election that meets the definition understood by western European and American standards was that for the constituent assembly in late 1917. This election went against the Bolsheviks to such a degree that force had to be used to prevent implementation of the results. Stalin did not say, nor is it reasonable to suppose the Communist party intended, that electoral contests were envisaged which would result in the impairment of the Communist party's de facto position in the country.

The constitution was formally adopted in December, 1936. The scheduling of the first elections under it in 1937 coincided with major foreign, domestic and party crises. The League of Nations, membership in which had appeared to be an achievement for the Soviet Union in 1934, was in process of disintegration under the impact of the Spanish Civil War crisis, and Japan's celebrated "China incident" began in the Far East in 1937. Production rates within the Soviet Union were not being maintained under the comparatively more relaxed atmosphere of 1935-36 and pressure was being reintroduced. Above all, the evidence of division, and in the party sense, conspiracy, in Communist party ranks led to the great purges of 1937-38. From the stand-

point of the party as Stalin knew it, the Leninist revolutionary brotherhood, disciplined and unanimous behind the party line, 1937 was no time for election contests, least of all at an all-union level involving the highest political personalities in the country. Without underrating the very real achievements of the party in the first and second five year plans, it might very well be that the mood of the country was like that described by Harper as characteristic at the end of the civil war: grateful for what the Bolsheviks and the soviets had done for them in 1917, workers and peasants yet wanted Bolsheviks and soviets without Communists. Therefore in 1937 the truly model electoral laws were followed to the letter--but the stakes were removed from the game lest the working masses decide they wanted planning and collectives without Communists.

#### Single Member Districts

Elections since the 1936 constitution have been on the basis of representation by geographical districts for all soviets. The electoral laws<sup>3</sup> have defined the norm of representation by population--for the supreme soviet of the union one per 300,000 (the soviet of nationalities has an arbitrary number of representatives per national unit); for the RSFSR the norm was one per 150,000 (the norm of population per deputy in republic soviets varied by republic). In the local soviets a distinction was made in the 1939 law for different regions; for oblast soviets the ratio was not the same in sparsely populated provinces as in more densely populated provinces, for example:<sup>4</sup>

Murmansk	oblast soviet	- 1 deputy for 5,000 population
Moscow	oblast soviet	- 1 deputy for 60,000 population
Rostov	oblast soviet	- 1 deputy for 30,000 population
Irkutsk	oblast soviet	- 1 deputy for 15,000 population
Perm	oblast soviet	- 1 deputy for 20,000 population

In the electoral law for the 1947 local elections (the next to be held at this level because of the interruption of the war) these variations by geographical region were eliminated and a fixed ratio depending upon the population was adopted for all: the size of rural soviets ranged between 9 and 25 deputies; raion soviets between 25 and 60; oblast soviets between 70 and 150. These are somewhat smaller than under the former system where a raion or volost congress might have up to 150 members, and an uezd or okrug congress up to 300 members. Urban soviets range all the way from 35 deputies for less than 12,000 population to 700 deputies for cities of 500,000 or over. Moscow and Leningrad city soviets have well over 1,000 deputies each. In the larger cities there are also ward soviets, ranging in size from 35 to 250 deputies.

The executive committee of the soviet for which deputies are to be elected delimits the districts for representation, except in rural soviets, where the soviet itself sets the districts. In the absence of contests between rival candidates in the same districts, evidence of dispute over the drawing of boundaries for representational districts is completely lacking. The primary consideration is therefore the convenience of the voters, and to this end new precincts are created whenever necessary. In the case of elections to many local soviets where the district for representation has only a few hundred inhabitants, precincts are generally unnecessary. In districts for higher level soviets precincts generally are required, and the number and size are determined by the lowest level soviet that has jurisdiction in the area. For example, the oblast executive committee will set up the representational district for the oblast soviet, but--if the district involves a rural area--the rural soviets within that district will determine the precincts necessary in their own territory. It is carefully stipulated, however, that while the convenience of voters is the important thing in establishing precincts, precincts must be set up on the basis of territorial division and not by place of work. An example might be a rural soviet whose territory was included in a geographical district for republic representation, i. e., a district with

150,000 inhabitants altogether. The rural soviet's territory has 2,000 inhabitants; there are two kolkhozes and one saw-mill, and there are three villages of 500, 900 and 600 inhabitants. Precincts might be established for each of the three villages but not for each kolkhoz and the mill. If the villages were close together probably only one precinct would be necessary.<sup>5</sup> There may not be, in fact, much difference between the three principal enterprises and the three centers of population, but the emphasis in the statutes is very definitely on the territorial division.

### Qualifications of Candidates and Electors

Once representational districts are established for any soviet on the basis of population, the problem of determining the eligible voters is largely the taking of a census of all citizens over the age of 18. A very great part of the soviet argument supporting the claim that the soviet electoral system is the most democratic in the world rests upon the completeness of enfranchisement of all adults.<sup>6</sup> There are no direct or indirect limitations on the right of any citizen of the union over 18 to vote, except a conviction in court which carries deprivation of civil rights, or court order on mental incompetence. When the new universal franchise was introduced, it was urged that since court action was practically the only way persons might be deprived of voting rights--whereas formerly there had been many grounds for deprivation--courts should use great care. In other words, this form of deprivation took on more significance.<sup>7</sup> Since the war (1945) a slight distinction between the right to vote and the right to be elected has been introduced on the basis of age; candidates for the supreme soviet of the union must be 23, for republic soviets 21. There are literally no direct or indirect limitations, such as length of residence in a district, on the franchise. No system makes it easier for everybody to vote, for registration is not a mat-

ter of individual initiative, and all expenses connected with elections are a state charge. If democracy were defined only as the participation of all in the voting to fill elective offices of state, the soviet system would have a maximum degree of democracy.

The date, as well as the electoral law, for all local elections is set by the presidium of the supreme soviet of the republic.<sup>8</sup> The date must be announced two months in advance and at the same time the list of districts for which representatives will be elected must be published.<sup>9</sup> The lists of electors--lists of those deprived of right to vote, formerly required, disappeared--are compiled by the local urban or rural soviets and are based on the housing record of urban soviets, and the homestead record and list of temporary residents of rural soviets. The soviet may send a representative to any address to verify the records when making up voting lists.<sup>10</sup> Lists are made up in alphabetical order by precinct, the entries numbered serially, with full name, age, and address of the voter. A column is provided for the notation "da" (yes), entered when the voter is handed his ballot on election day. There is also provided a space for stating the reason when any voter's name is removed or he is given certificate of right to vote which will be used in a precinct where he is not a resident.<sup>11</sup> One copy of the list is kept by the soviet; one copy is displayed for public inspection, with a member of the soviet on duty to help voters in verifying their registration; and one copy goes to the precinct electoral commission the day before the election to use at the polls. In areas of widely scattered population more copies may be publicly displayed and members of electoral commissions assist voters in the inspection of the display lists.

Electoral lists must be open for inspection at least thirty days before the date set for elections. If a voter moves between the time lists are compiled and the day of the election he secures a certificate, signed by the president and secretary of the local soviet and bearing its seal, of his right to vote. The certificate gives full data on the

precinct from which the voter is moving, his complete name, age and address, and states that upon presentation by the bearer, together with some form of personal identification, he should be added to the voting list in the precinct to which he is moving. His name is then crossed from the first list. A voter also secures a certificate, any time up to the date of the election, if he discovers that he will be away from his home precinct on election day. He is thereby enabled to vote at any precinct upon presentation of his certificate. Each precinct keeps a record of those who vote in this fashion, attested by the president and secretary of the precinct electoral commission.<sup>12</sup> The citizen who merely wishes to avoid voting has practically no chance to avoid having his failure on record. This subjects him to a kind of notoriety few soviet citizens wish to incur.

Errors of omission or commission in the compiling of electoral lists are, of course, possible. An elaborate procedure for minimizing disenfranchisement due to error or failure of the administrative authorities is provided, however. Protests of inaccuracy in the list may be made either orally or in writing to the soviet responsible for the list in which error is charged, or may be made to the precinct electoral commission, in which event the protest must be reported to the soviet the same day. Soviets must take action of record within three days. For example, I. N. Ipatiev submits an affidavit to the effect that his name appears on the list as Ivan Nikoforovich and it should be Ion Nikoforovich; the soviet orders the change. Or again, one Abramov alleges in oral complaint before the soviet that the name of I. A. Antonov should be removed from the list because the latter, under court order, was deprived of voting right. Upon investigation the soviet finds the charge supported by a case of the people's court in the city of Tula, in which Antonov was sentenced under Article 116 of the criminal code to two years deprivation of liberty and five years deprivation of voting right. Copy of the decision filed and Antonov's name ordered removed.<sup>13</sup>

If the correction requested in a complaint is not made,



the executive committee of the soviet must give written notice why. Should Antonov, for example, complain his name was omitted, he would be notified that copy of the court order on the basis of which the soviet acted is on file. If the complainant disagrees with the decision taken by the soviet he may go to the people's court having jurisdiction over the precinct in which complainant resides. The people's court must act within a three day term also (including the day of filing if before twelve noon), in open session, with both the complainant and a representative of the soviet present. The decision of the people's court is final, and the costs are a state expense.<sup>14</sup> The new procedure gives the courts a role in the protection of electoral rights, which is in contrast to the old electoral system where problems of elections were handled entirely within the administrative structure. This new procedure only strengthens the soviet claim to the democratic character of its electoral procedures--the local people's courts are presided over by popularly elected professional judges and two non-professional citizens, also elected.

### The Bloc of Party and Non-party Bolsheviks

Universal, equal, direct elections for all soviets on the basis of single member territorial districts--the major change from the pre-1936 system of elections--left substantially untouched the techniques for manipulating nominations and representation already worked out. The first local election law (1939) under the 1936 constitution followed the pattern already set by the 1937 law on union elections, and the 1938 law on republic elections, so far as nomination was concerned. The law provided that nominations to local soviets might be made by any regularly organized, and recognized, social organization; the Communist party, trade unions, cooperative federations, etc. In practice nominating meetings have become assemblies of voters and not meetings of some

troup of members of a social organization as such. It was stipulated that while the central branch of any such social organizations might nominate in any local soviet election, and the lower branches also down through the raion level organs of the organization, the primary units of the organization may not submit nominations.<sup>15</sup> This, in short, prevents the rank and file membership of a social organization, functioning as such, from participating in the nomination. There is nothing to prevent a general meeting of voters, called by the local Communist party cell, from nominating a candidate put forward by the same cell. But in so far as the recognized social organizations are concerned it is a secondary level of representation that has the right to nominate; that is, those branches of social organizations that are already the fruit of a selective process in an organizational hierarchy dominated at the top by a centralized party leadership.

Participation for the citizen as such in the nominating process is still provided, as before 1936, through general nominating meetings held by enterprise, by shift in a factory, by kolkhoz, by sovkhoz, etc. Large numbers of these meetings are held once a campaign gets under way and many people attend. In the Stalin district of Moscow during the preparations for elections of judges and popular associates to the people's court in 1949, 129 meetings to nominate candidates were reported, attended by over 22,000 people.<sup>16</sup> An overwhelming number of the candidates nominated are proposed by these general nominating meetings, rather than as the nominees of branches of social organizations. This is not to say that the initiative in choosing the person to be named or in presenting his name to a nominating assembly does not usually come from some branch of a social organization such as the party or a trade union. In fact, it is carefully explained that these general nominating meetings may concur in a decision already taken by some other social organization which has presented a candidate for nomination, and this frequently occurs. But in practice there seems to be a concentrated effort to have the public record show that

a popular nominating assembly, and not an organ of a social organization, sponsored the candidate. The legal nominating right of these social organizations is a strategic reserve for steamroller tactics that have not been employed generally as yet. In any case, when a name is presented for nomination (a candidate is not legally nominated until formally registered by an electoral commission, as will be noted below) there must be a protocol of the meeting from which the name is proposed; the protocol shows on whose initiative the meeting was called, where and when it was held, and how many voters attended, as well of course as the full name, address, age, and occupation of the proposed nominee.<sup>17</sup>

An individual need not be a resident of the district for which his name is submitted as a nominee, but he may be finally nominated to only one district for any single soviet.<sup>18</sup> This provision does not preclude an individual's standing for one district in each of several soviets, however. The same individual may represent the territorial division in which he lives in a ward soviet, the city soviet, the provincial soviet (if his city is under the jurisdiction of a province; most cities large enough to have ward soviets are not), the republic soviet, and the union soviet. On the other hand, the same individual may also represent a multitude of different districts in widely scattered territorial units. Stalin and his principal associates were duly nominated and elected as deputies in the city soviets of every major city in the USSR in 1950.<sup>19</sup> Since soviets in large cities run to several hundred members, the work of the soviets probably did not suffer from the fact of several absentee deputies on the roster. The law also provides, in a legal guarantee against electoral abuses sometimes found in other systems, that a candidate proposed for nomination may not be a member of the electoral commission of the district for which he stands<sup>20</sup>--although he may serve in the electoral commission of a district in which he is not a candidate--nor may he serve on any precinct electoral commission within the district where he is a candidate.

The deadline for registration of candidates is 35 days

before election day in the case of krai, oblast, okrug and raion soviets, and only 20 days for city, ward, and rural soviets. In theory this staggering of dates would permit consideration for the second category of names suggested but not used in the first. In practice the interval has little importance except to even out the clerical work of elections, since individuals are usually not proposed for nomination a second time for another category of soviet in the same election. Before a candidate's name is registered he must consent to accept his nomination for the district. This he does by a letter to the electoral commission.

The law provides that every candidate properly nominated and who accepts must be registered by the district electoral commission, which then reports to the corresponding soviet executive committee. The soviet executive committee has two days to protest any nomination and its action is final. The names of candidates are published five days after registration closes.<sup>21</sup> The refusal of an electoral commission to register a nominee may be protested to the next higher electoral commission, but the action of such higher commission is final. While the protection of voting right has become, since 1936, a matter for court action, nominating is still a matter that is wholly within the administrative hierarchy and not subject to court review. Sessions of electoral commissions for the registration of nominees are open to representatives of the nominating groups and the press.

Although there is no legal restriction on the number of candidates that may be registered and placed on the ballot, in practice, as is well known, only one candidate's name appears on the ballot. The result is a single bloc of candidates, some of whom are party members, and some of whom are not, but all of whom together comprise an official party sponsored slate. A somewhat euphemistic explanation of this phenomenon appears in Soviet Russia Today: "The practice is for the district election committee to call delegated meetings to sift the nominations from the local organizations and to arrive at placement of candidates on the ballot. The law does not restrict the number of candidates that can be put on

the ballot for a given office but the practice in the last two elections for the Supreme Soviet showed that in an overwhelming majority of the cases the district election committees, in cooperation with the representatives of the nominating meetings, unanimously chose a most favored candidate to be placed on the ballot without opposition."<sup>22</sup> This is certainly not an unprecedented procedure in other countries; what is unusual, perhaps, is the extent to which the procedure is organized and used--i. e., over the entire country, for all levels of soviet. But in many regions it is not necessary for the electoral commission to call meetings of the nominating groups to go over proposed delegates to cull out the strongest. This has been done in advance by party or other organs and only one name is before the commission, though the name may have been offered by numerous nominating sessions.

Since the letter of the law provides every indication that electoral contests, as they exist in other countries, are legal, how are such contests avoided? There is considerable evidence that when the constitution of 1936 was under discussion, and even after it was adopted, electoral contests were expected (see above, p. 52), but during 1937-38, when elections to the union and republic soviets took place, contests were eliminated by police (NKVD) action. The period concerned was one in which terrorism flourished in connection with the extensive purge trials. By the time of the local elections of 1939 open contests were not taking place and the one man slate was a fixture.

On the other hand the one man slate does not mean that party leadership in Moscow hand picks the hundreds of thousands of candidates who stand for deputy to local soviets all over the USSR. "Moscow" does not say who is to run for the city soviet in Voronezh--as one former member of that soviet put it, "Moscow can't know everybody in every hick town in Russia."<sup>23</sup> The heads of even so well-oiled and entrenched a machine as the Communist party cannot know all the potential soviet members, and must depend, in recruiting personnel, on nominations from various local groups, and on the vigilance of local party officials. It is desirable,

therefore, that all social groups have wide latitude in naming candidates, at the same time that it is indispensable to control selection of the one candidate who actually runs and then maintain unanimity behind him. How the sifting process is accomplished is difficult to document, because so far as the available evidence shows it is not a recorded process.<sup>24</sup> But the process of selecting officers or members of councils in non-political organizations in the USSR may be presumed to be similar, since membership in social organizations in the Soviet Union is regarded as educational in purpose. The Pioneers, The trade unions, etc., are all training schools for the soviet citizen.<sup>25</sup>

The final choice of a candidate for nomination is made with a view to putting forward in the public eye the best representation possible for the soviet in question. Time and again the articles in the press during the period of nominations will contain the statement: "We must send the best sons and daughters of the socialist fatherland to the soviets." The presence of these people in public office will give prestige to the soviets, which are the principal showpieces among the socialist state's institutions. The executive committee of the local soviet, or the electoral commission, or the principal local leaders--usually an interlocking directorate--will look over the names presented and consider them for the best representation of the elderly, the women, the artists, the authors, the administrators, the schoolteachers, the doctors, the housewives, the youth and so on. And in some instances a person who has distinguished himself in some socially constructive way will be watched and his name suggested to nominating agencies at election time. The electoral commission is then advised whom to run. For the most part it is a local responsibility to make the choices within these lines, but since it is the legal responsibility of the higher organs to supervise the work of the lower the decisive influence of superior members of the administrative hierarchy is always in the background. It would be foolish to suppose that in the process of discussion and selection there would not be occasions when the parti-

sans of this or that proposed candidate failed of complete harmony. When such unofficial pre-nomination contests develop the decision, in the best interests of the soviet system, comes down from above and nominees are decided by the local committee in consultation with the higher.<sup>26</sup>

In practice, therefore, the old habits of nomination, and the persistence of meetings by social organization, or sifting of representation by social group for the final stage of nomination, result in much the same type of representation as before 1936. Under the former electoral system, precincts were on the basis of social group or occupational unit and candidates were representative of such. The territorial precinct has not changed that characteristic of representation. In many ways there is a superficial impression that everything typical of the pre-1936 electoral practice (not the legal inequality of franchise) is continued; nominating assemblies are similar to the old electoral assemblies without the electoral legal formalities. Superimposed is the machinery of the new electoral laws for election day. In practice also the fundamental characteristic that the office seeks the man in soviet elections is maintained under the one man slate. The American practice by which those who wish to be nominated for elective office publicly announce the fact and openly proselyte in their own behalf has no counterpart in a system where distinction in one's vocation is a leading factor in nomination. Public competition for the honor of nomination is restricted by non-political circumstances. When Siderov is announced by some group as a desirable nominee--Siderov the Stakhanovite, who is politically literate as a result of attending party indoctrination schools, who is an experienced agitator, who has, perhaps, been to Moscow--then plain citizen Miroshnikov knows it would be not only imprudent but ludicrous for him to aspire to nomination against Siderov.

It follows from the whole process of selection and nomination that the campaign, once the nomination is officially registered, is entirely unlike those where rival nominees for the same office compete for the voters' favor. The soviet

candidate's only opponent is public apathy and electoral campaigns go to great lengths to eradicate it. One Russian participant explained that while Hollywood has Russia beaten all hollow when it comes to spectacles such as Quo vadis or musical extravaganzas, the roles are reversed when American and Russian political campaigns are compared.<sup>27</sup> Probably the best characterization is that of Professor G. T. Robinson, who compares Russian elections to American Liberty Loan or Defense Bond drives during the two world wars.<sup>28</sup> Practically no one publicly disagrees with the objectives, but enormous energy is expended not only to get as many people as possible to participate but to participate as a matter of conscious public affirmation--to admit they want to participate. The only campaign issue is support or non-support on a question which no one publicly dares reject--do you favor the soviet system?

Literally millions participate directly in the propagandist and educational features of the Russian local electoral campaigns.<sup>29</sup> To elect 1,200,000 deputies to the various local soviets throughout the USSR in a single campaign, about 7,000,000 people must serve as members of district electoral commissions.<sup>30</sup> The organization of study groups for the Stalin constitution and the local election law in every village and household is a standard technique. Another standard technique is voluntary overtime work to exceed production quotas and thus give evidence of the success of the soviet institutions.<sup>31</sup> All campaign expenses are borne by the state, which is certainly logical in view of the campaign objectives. In other countries individuals and private groups will spend money to secure election of certain individuals; the elected one expects recompense in some form--salary and emoluments, perquisites of office, or other--for his trouble. His attitude is logically quite different from that of the soviet candidate, who is receiving a public honor--and at state expense.

The election law assures to every organization nominating a candidate duly registered by the district electoral commission, as well as to every individual citizen, full right to



agitate in the candidate's behalf in public assemblies, the press or other mediums.<sup>32</sup> The fact that one's candidate is unopposed on the ballot, far from contributing to lack of campaigning activity, merely channels the extensive agitation that takes place. There is no promoting of this candidate as against that one; the campaign provides an opportunity for each individual constituent to show his loyalty to the soviet institutions by public agitation for the officially sponsored candidate. The soviet style campaign is not so much one in which the candidate woos the voters as one in which the voter courts publicity for his support of the candidate. Passivity of the voter in the campaign is regarded as opposition, therefore he must take the initiative if he is to demonstrate his active adherence to the soviets. Such initiative is made easier, of course, by lavish provision of suitable agitational materials. A teacher, for example, is expected to make political addresses for the edification of the local inhabitants. Prepared materials are distributed, which the individual--the more clever ones at least--may tailor to his own style and his particular audience. The audience for such extracurricular speakers may be mostly women in some areas; the men get their political education at the factory, or the union meeting, or elsewhere, and do not attend.<sup>33</sup>

### Election Boards and Voting Procedure

The functions of electoral commissions have necessarily undergone some change in the shift from an electoral system which was oriented toward selective scrutiny of the voters to one which is directed wholly toward selective scrutiny of nominees. Formerly the electoral commission was responsible for voter registration and the exclusion of the disenfranchised, and conducted the electoral assemblies at which nominating and election took place. Under the new system the electoral commission's responsibilities are

shifted to registering nominees, preparing ballots, conducting the polls and counting results, and providing a mandate for the elected deputy.

The composition and the hierarchical structure of electoral commissions, however, was carried over intact from the previous system to the present one. The krai or oblast electoral commission, made up of a president, vice-president, secretary, and eight to ten members approved by the presidium of the supreme soviet of the republic at least 55 days before the election date, is recruited by taking representatives from a list of organizations almost identical with that of organizations given the right to nominate.<sup>34</sup> The Leningrad oblast electoral commission for the 1939 local elections, for example, was composed of the following:<sup>35</sup>

President, K. G. Somova, from Leningrad oblast committee of the union of machine tractor station workers

Vice-president, V. D. Leikin, from the workers, employees and engineering-technical personnel of the Ordzhonikidze factory in Leningrad

Secretary, V. D. Smirnov, from the workers association of the newspaper "Leningrad Pravda"

10 members:

N. P. Gorbunova, from the workers, employees and engineering-technical personnel of the Keramichesky factory, in the city of Borovichi

A. P. Grigorieva, from the kolkhozniks of the kolkhoz "Pruzhitsy," Volosovsky raion

I. D. Zheleznov, from the workers and employees of the Slavkovsky machine tractor station

T. I. Liutova, from the Leningrad oblast organization of the Komsomol

V. P. Moiseienko, from the workers, employees, and engineering-technical personnel of the October railway depot marshalling yards

M. N. Nikitin, from the Leningrad oblast party organization

V. A. Nikiforova, from the workers, employees and engineering-technical personnel of the Skorokhod mill

- V. I. Seminov, from the Leningrad oblast soviet Osoaviakhim (Society for Promotion of Defence and Aviation and Chemical Industries)
- E. V. Tsbina, from the raion committee of the union of workers in primary and middle schools of Krasnogvardeisky raion
- V. K. Shmanenko, from the enlisted men, officers, and political workers of the Leningrad military district.

This commission included six women, one representative each for the party and Komsomol organizations as such, and in general reflects the same representation specified for electoral commissions under the pre-1936 system (see above, p. 29).

Much of the stress on the democracy of the nominating procedure rests on the representative character of the electoral commissions as provided by law.<sup>36</sup> Representation by group is not of itself more democratic (in the sense of universal participation) than other means of representation. But it may be, in theory, much more representative than, in fact, representative systems which rely wholly on party organizations for most nominating. In the United States, delegates from, say, the state of Georgia, in a Republican national convention are hardly representatives of the people of Georgia in the wider sense; indeed they neither pretend to be nor are expected to be. The representative character of the soviet electoral commission is a fiction in the non-soviet view because of the fact that all of the organizations which participate in the electoral commission are ultimately controlled by the same directing party machine. But the machinery, as prescribed in the laws, provides that the social organization's local branch presents its representative for the local electoral commission, who must then be approved by the local soviet.<sup>37</sup> On paper the procedure reflects a wide base of representation.

The krai or oblast electoral commission is chiefly concerned with examining complaints concerning irregularity in the activity of lower commissions and gives the final de-

cision: Therefore while the law provides that all properly registered candidates must appear on the ballot, the regulation of this matter, should any complaint about the failure to register arise, is still an affair of the administrative hierarchy and not a court action. The krai or oblast commission also prepares the ballots for distribution to lower commissions, registers all elected candidates and gives a mandate to the deputy in the krai or oblast soviet.<sup>38</sup> The composition, organization, and function of the raion electoral commission and the city electoral commission, corresponding to the raion or city soviets to which elections are to be held, is in exactly the same pattern as the krai or oblast electoral commission.

The district electoral commission for the territorial<sup>39</sup> district from which one deputy is to be elected to a krai/oblast, raion, city, etc., soviet, is also made up of representatives from the various social organizations. For oblast districts the electoral commission has a president, vice-president, secretary and four to six members approved by the oblast executive committee at least fifty days before the election. For the Leningrad oblast soviet elections in 1939, 146 district electoral commissions were required for the 71 representational districts in the city of Leningrad and the 75 representational districts in the rest of the oblast. In non-urban areas the representational district was commonly coterminous with a raion, or in some instances two raions.<sup>40</sup> The district electoral commission defines the precincts necessary in the district, registers the nominees proposed for deputy, provides ballots for the precincts and declares the results of the balloting for the district. It gives a certificate of election for the deputy, although the mandate is from the oblast electoral commission.<sup>41</sup> The precinct electoral commissions operating within territorial electoral districts are purely clerical units for receiving and tabulating votes and handling cases of omissions from the voters registration lists. The boundaries for precincts are identical for all representational districts, whatever the level of local soviet, in any one election; the number re-

quired, based on population, is set by the city or city raion in urban areas, by the raion in rural areas, and the personnel approved in the same pattern as for other electoral commissions. A precinct electoral commission in local elections would handle in any one election at most three ballots--one for a deputy to the rural or city-raion soviet, one for a deputy to the raion or city soviet, one for a deputy to the krai or oblast soviet.<sup>42</sup> On each of the possible three ballots only one office, and one candidate for the office, will be listed. The precinct commission must be established not less than 40 days before the election date, the membership consisting of the usual president, vice-president, secretary and four to six members. The expenses of all electoral commissions are paid by the state, half the members constitute a quorum, majority decides, the president's vote being decisive in case of tie.

In addition to the functions of the electoral commission prescribed in the law, the commission's practical objective--as indicated before--is the winnowing out, if necessary, of the single official candidate from the list of all those proposed. To the extent that the electoral commission actually has different names to consider it might be compared to the nominating committee in American parliamentary practice. The duty of the nominating committee is to present a qualified nominee, who has agreed to compete, for each vacancy. There, to be sure, the analogy ends, as in American procedure there is other machinery for additional nominations, while in soviet procedure there is none. But the device is not unprecedented. The session of the district electoral commission at which the selected candidate is formally registered must be open to representatives of nominating organizations. When nominations issue from a general voters' assembly held for nominating purposes, the assembly may, by law, present more than one name; it may offer in nomination a proposed candidate for each organization which has the right to nominate, and which organization is represented in the general meeting.<sup>43</sup> In practice such assemblies usually agree on one name only.<sup>44</sup>

The territorial soviets--krai, oblast, raion, city, etc.--whose complement of deputies is to be renewed, and the date for holding the election, are announced not less than two months in advance by the presidium of the supreme soviet of the republic.<sup>45</sup> This is the provision which largely nullifies the constitutional stipulation of two year terms for deputies, a stipulation which ought to insure regular and frequent renewal of elected local bodies. There is no effective machinery for compelling the presidium of a union republic to call elections; in only a single instance since the adoption of the 1936 constitution has the interval between local elections been precisely two years. In the RSFSR local elections have been held in 1939, 1947, 1950 (December), 1953 (February), and 1955 (February).

Election days are now always on a Sunday, i. e., on a rest day, in contrast to the pre-1936 era when elections were always on a work day. Elections on work days were convenient for assembly of the voters by place of work or organization, but workers were paid for the time spent at electoral assemblies. The rest day election is obviously more expedient for the territorial basis of representation.

The electoral law has model provisions to insure voter convenience and to guard against fraud. The polling time is from 6 a. m. to 12 midnight local time. The precincts are established in such number and with such boundaries as to minimize the time element required for a citizen to cast his ballot. So successfully is this aspect of elections organized that there are often press reports that balloting in X district was completed in two hours--one hundred percent fulfillment of quota, in other words. Although all registered voters of the district may have cast ballots in a short period, polls presumably must remain open for the statutory time, since a voter with a certificate of right to vote may legally present himself to vote in any district up until midnight. Even if a voter is on a transcontinental railway train on election day, or aboard ship, provision is made for him to cast his ballot. For hospital patients or the shut-in, the voting urn is carried to the bedside. There are no physical ob-

stacles to the one hundred percent voting turnout reported by hundreds of districts in every soviet election.

The superficial details of election day activity are for all the world like those of any average American precinct. On election day the president of the district (or precinct) electoral commission inspects and seals the boxes for receiving ballots before voting begins. Electioneering at the polls is forbidden (!). When the voter presents himself at the polls he identifies himself to the secretary of the electoral commission--by his passport, his collective farm book, his professional (union) card, or other identification. His name is checked on the registration list; if he presents a certificate from another district his name, etc., is entered. He receives his ballot and the envelope for it and this fact is checked on the list. He receives a separate ballot and envelope therefor corresponding to each vacancy for which voting is being held. The voter retires with his ballot to the booth provided for marking the ballot in private; the booth must be provided with pen and ink or pencils of one color to insure secrecy. There should be in each booth written instructions on how to ballot--for example:<sup>46</sup>

"Read before filling out ballot.

1. Vote for only one candidate on each ballot.
2. If ballot has more than one family name cross out those you do not want and leave only one, for whom you are voting.
3. Make no blots, corrections, or additions to the ballot."

No other person is allowed in the booth with the voter except in cases of the illiterate or the physically handicapped who require aid. The completed ballot is placed in the envelope and sealed, and then placed in the voting box.<sup>47</sup>

The ballot itself, in other words, is kept very simple (see p. 74). There is only one office to be voted for on any single ballot--and only one candidate. There is not, therefore, any doubt in the voter's mind as to what the issue is;

BALLOT<sup>48</sup>

№ 5

District

For election to.....rural  
soviet of working people's deputies, Lebiazhesky raion,  
Kirov oblast, RSFSR

"24" December 1939

Family, given name, patronymic of candidate for deputy	By whom candidate for deputy was proposed
Petrov Ivan Andreievich	General assembly of the peasants of the "Road to Communism" Kolkhoz

District Electoral Commission for elections  
to the rural soviet of working people's deputies



he votes for the regime and its officially sponsored candidate. There is no rationalizing around that fact. There is no doubt, either, in anyone's mind, if the voter does not vote, or if he scratches the candidate's name. All is white or black--there is no middle ground, no neutrality.

Some observers maintain that the nature of the voting instructions--vote for only one candidate--as well as the fact that on the ballot itself the instruction is given to strike off all names but one, means that the idea of electoral contests is not dead. Russians are being educated in the procedures of modern elections, and some day in the future may be allowed a choice of candidates on election day. It is also true that the sample forms for tallying results make provision for showing the returns for more than one candidate.<sup>49</sup> Certainly there can be no argument that the legal machinery for elections on western European or American lines is all present. Not a word of the present laws would need to be changed. But the practices now in effect completely alter the character of those very laws. It is not easy to see how the customs can be so readily changed as the laws.

The secret ballot, for which such elaborate precautions are taken in the law, may appear a mockery to Americans in view of the fact that there is no choice among candidates on the ballot. But considering the character of the soviet election campaign--the voter's opportunity to stand in public and be counted on the right side--secrecy presents curious problems. The voter has an interest in breaking the secrecy so it will be known that he voted correctly, especially if he happens to live in a district where some of the small percentage of scratched ballots occur. The correctness of one's voting record was no problem in the old system of public balloting by show of hands. Many a voter, therefore, took the precaution under the new system of writing in his name and address on his ballot.<sup>50</sup> During the 1950 elections the press reported that many had gone even further, writing in such patriotic slogans as "Long live Stalin."

At the same time that the voter connives at avoiding the secrecy provisions when it appears to be to his advantage to

do so, the representatives of the regime also have incentive for disregarding secrecy regulations. Since the soviet system does not envisage what is known elsewhere as a loyal opposition, it is especially important for the soviet regime to know not only how many stand against it, but who. According to one witness this is sometimes accomplished by the simple expedient of placing a mirror over the curtained booth where the voter prepares his ballot.<sup>51</sup> The ballot, in order to be cast for the sole candidate whose name officially appears on it, need not be marked in any way but simply placed in the envelope. If, under those circumstances, a voter were seen picking up pen or pencil, he had better be doing so for the purpose of writing some patriotic sentiment and not for scratching the candidate's name.

When the polls close the ballot boxes are sealed. Counting of votes by the electoral commission is conducted in the presence of representatives of the press and of representatives delegated by social organizations that have the right to nominate candidates. Returns from precincts are sent to the district electoral commission, which tallies the results in a similar procedure and certifies the election of the deputy for the district.<sup>52</sup> Precinct electoral commissions deliver their ballots for safe keeping to city soviets, city-raion soviets, or raion soviets as the case may be.<sup>53</sup> Since a candidate must receive the votes of an absolute majority of the eligible voters in the district, at least fifty percent of the voters must actually cast ballots. If less than this percentage of the voters participate the election is declared invalid and the district commission asks the central commission to set a new election date. The tally form also provides for the eventuality that more than fifty percent of the eligible voters cast ballots but of several candidates none receives a clear majority. The district commission then reports the two candidates with the highest pluralities and sets a date, within two weeks, for new balloting.<sup>54</sup>

The electoral commission is also required to return a form covering spoiled ballots. A ballot may be thrown out if not of the prescribed form and color, if cast without the

prescribed envelope, or in an envelope not of the prescribed form or color. These rules are obviously written to preclude substitution of fraudulent ballots for official ones. A ballot is also invalid if too many candidates' names are left on, since a ballot is for one vacancy only.<sup>55</sup> It is practically impossible for a voter to spoil an official ballot unless he writes in the name of an unofficial candidate--there is no such thing as a legal write-in. An official ballot, containing one name for the vacant office, is not invalidated if the voter writes his own name on it, or such patriotic slogans as "Hail the great socialist fatherland," or a tribute to Stalin. Spoiled ballots may therefore probably be interpreted, except for carelessness in permitting ballots to be deposited without envelopes, as deliberate complaints against the regime, in a class with scratched ballots. The percentage reported is extremely small; that any are reported at all may be due to the fact that the penalty for falsification of electoral data is three years deprivation of liberty.<sup>56</sup>

As illustration of the electoral procedure, the 1939 local elections in the Ukraine are illuminating, even when followed in the official press. The call for elections to be held in December 1939 was duly issued two months in advance. By the first of November the local units of various social organizations had nominated representatives to serve on electoral commissions, and these nominations were in process of confirmation by the oblast executive committees.<sup>57</sup> Within a few days organizational meetings of oblast electoral commissions were under way. At Odessa, for example, the secretary of the oblast party committee and a member of the oblast soviet executive committee were present to explain the work.<sup>58</sup> This consisted chiefly of supervising the establishment of electoral districts for representation and precincts for polling; in Zaporozhie oblast 76 districts (for oblast soviet) and 1,002 precincts (to be used for all levels of soviet in the province) were defined.<sup>59</sup> By the middle of November nominations for deputy were being received and the process of registering official candidates was under way. Tentative nomination of the same individual in several dis-

tricts of the same soviet was reported generally in the 1939 election. For example, A. A. Zhdanov was nominated for the Leningrad oblast soviet in ten different districts in Leningrad.<sup>60</sup> Of course, since a candidate may accept final nomination in only one district alternate nominations would be necessary, or several districts would go unrepresented. This contingency was apparently handled along the lines suggested by the case of N. S. Khrushchev in Kiev during the 1939 elections.

Khrushchev was a prominent Ukrainian Communist party figure, now a member of the highest central party organs in the USSR, and the type of individual to attract as much attention in a Ukrainian election as party boss Zhdanov in a Leningrad election. On November 10 the employees of the "Bolshevik" machine tool plant met to propose nominations for deputy; unanimously selected for the oblast soviet from the 54th Zhovtnevoi District were N. S. Khrushchev and Iakob Danilovich Khoroshko, veteran of forty-seven years in the plant and a Stakhanovite foundryman. At the same meeting, candidates for five districts in the city soviet were unanimously put in nomination--one a master worker, one a Stakhanovite instrument worker, one the factory director, one the foreman of the model department, and one a Stakhanovite in the copper department. A resolution was also passed requesting Khrushchev to accept the nomination from the 54th District.<sup>61</sup> Thus, in the event of the illustrious Khrushchev's being nominated in other districts, the 54th had a spare in reserve. On November 16 about 800 workers of the first shift in the "Gorky" automatic machine factory met in the machine shop's Red Corner (clubroom). On the proposal of the secretary of the party bureau organization in the factory, the meeting decided to support the action of the "Bolshevik" plant in nominating that stout non-party Bolshevik, Stakhanovite foundryman Iakob Danilovich Khoroshko.<sup>62</sup>

In the Kiev elections of this period there were two stages in many nominations, the features just described being preliminary. Large voters meetings such as those just described

not only suggested candidates' names but chose twenty-five to fifty delegates to attend a meeting of the workers of the entire electoral district; the district meeting then agreed on a single candidate for the district. This second meeting is referred to in the press as an electoral assembly--an expression obviously carried over from the pre-1936 pattern, and in view of the single candidate slate that issued from it a rather apt carryover in terms.<sup>63</sup> The so-called electoral assembly, with delegates from several earlier nominating "caucuses" (a term which might approximate the role of the "Bolshevik" and "Gorky" factory meetings), for Zhovtnevoi District No. 54, Kiev oblast soviet, was held on November 17, meeting in the cultural hall of the "Bolshevik" plant. At this meeting Khrushchev was the single choice and no alternate was named for nomination.<sup>64</sup> By this time the party authorities, or the electoral commission through which such problems were handled, or Khrushchev himself, had decided in which district he would stand, and no reserve nominee was required in District No. 54. Khrushchev's letter of acceptance of nomination in the Zhovtnevoi District was dated November 19. On the same date the electoral commission for the district sat and Khrushchev was duly registered as the candidate in the district. The session, with representatives of the press and of sponsoring groups, was held in the cultural hall of the "Bolshevik" plant and the minutes recorded that the required documents were properly presented: (1) proposal by the "Bolshevik" plant, (2) unanimous nomination by some 800 delegates in a general district meeting, and (3) Comrade Khrushchev's letter of acceptance.<sup>65</sup>

While the press continued to run pictures of the officially registered candidates for oblast soviets in the Ukraine, by November 23 raion and city soviet nominations were being reported. On November 28 the electoral commission for the 17th District of the Lenin city-raion soviet in Kiev registered Khrushchev as the candidate for the Kiev city soviet. The nomination in this instance was sponsored by a shoe factory of the 17th District.<sup>66</sup>

The machinery for nominating, registering, and polling, therefore, as described above, is in many ways analagous to that in other countries. If elections for all township, city, county and state offices in the United States were held at the same time a comparable mass of party caucuses, conventions, citizen groups, precinct and electoral board workers would be employed. The mere manning of polling places, with clerks, judges, and poll watchers, requires a formidable number of people, even if, when that stage is reached, the people so employed have nothing to do with selecting candidates nor, if the laws are duly observed, electing them. This is quite aside from any active participation of individuals during the campaign period. The point is that the wholly mechanical features of conducting popular elections in a large country, regardless of the degree of freedom in the election choices or of genuinely popular control of the outcome, entail the direct participation of some hundreds of thousands, even millions, of individual citizens. This is as true of the Soviet Union, with a single legal political party, and the latent terrorism of the avowed police state, as of the United States. There is, it seems to me, significance in this fact; so long as the principle of popular election, however baldly the manipulation of choice may be exercised, is preserved, the leaders in control are unable to operate the state machine without the participation of some millions of citizens. The participation of the ordinary citizen who is not in the party's intimate circle may be barren--this has sometimes been a debated question in the United States--but he nonetheless participates and to that extent the soviet concept of training the individual citizen to operate the state is kept alive. This is not an altogether negative contribution to the ultimate development of democratic political processes.

#### A Review of Results

A satisfactory comparison between results under the new

system and under the old has become progressively more difficult. After the 1939 local elections the total number of deputies elected, of voters participating, of party members and other information was published, all suggesting that except for the percentage of participation by eligible voters the results under the new system were substantially the same as those under the old. Following the 1947 and 1950 local elections less complete statistics were published. The total number of deputies for some of the republics was released, but not for all nor for the USSR as a whole, and the information about voter participation was given only in percentages with no base figure. More detailed returns on a few local soviets were given after the 1947 elections as a sample, but not after the 1950 elections.

In December 1952 announcement was made that local elections would take place throughout the union, beginning in the RSFSR on February 22, 1953, and extending into March in the other republics. Reports were published as the dates passed that the elections were duly carried out and the official bloc of party and non-party Bolsheviks returned by overwhelming majorities, but details of number of voters, or percentages on participation, were not supplied on the morrow of the election, as formerly. When elections to local soviets were called for February and March 1955, the announcement marked the first time that such elections had been held at the constitutional two year term. It is, of course, idle to speculate on this innovation in constitutional regularity. Immediately after the 1955 elections, figures were published for the total number of eligible voters, the percentage participating, and the percentage voting for the bloc of party and non-party candidates--upwards of 99 percent in both cases.

The authorities may well be reluctant to issue figures which, to alert foreign observers, give significant information. In the absence of census reports, for example, election returns have been used to calculate population in parts of the Soviet Union. In the 1953 local soviet electoral campaign a local color article in one newspaper mentioned that there were 240 deputies in the Noginsk city

soviet.<sup>67</sup> According to the representational scale in the election law the city of Noginsk would have a population of approximately 84,000 in order to elect 240 deputies. The official 1939 population for Noginsk was 81,024. A proliferation of this type of detailed information would certainly be revealing. Whether soviet authorities have abandoned the publication of election returns because of their value as clues to information that is considered secret, or for other reasons, however, a detailed analysis of electoral results and trends under the post-1936 electoral system is impractical.

It has already been mentioned that 50 percent of the eligible voters must cast ballots for a legal election to occur. Actually, as a result of the elaborate campaigning over the issue of patriotism, nearly one hundred percent of the eligible vote turns out. The number of deputies involved in local elections has been considerably reduced, despite increased territory, by the administrative consolidation that has taken place in the Soviet Union over the past twenty-five years. The December 1939 local election return reported 92,812,237 voters, or 99.21% of all eligible, in the election of 1,281,008 deputies for 6 krai, 88 oblast, 99 autonomous oblast, 21 okrug, 3572 raion, 912 city, 389 city-ward, and 63,183 rural soviets.<sup>68</sup>

Local elections held at the end of 1947 and again at the end of 1950 show the following results: the RSFSR elected 766,583 deputies in 1947, and 806,744 deputies in 1950, with 99.97% of the eligible voters participating and .4% voting against the bloc. Of the deputies elected in 1950, 287,843 or 35%, were women, and 423,892, or 52%, were non-party. The Ukrainian SSR elected 307,361 deputies in 1947, and 322,608 deputies in 1950, with 99.98% of the eligible voters participating and .17% voting against the bloc. Of the deputies elected in 1950, 212,931, or 66% were non-party. The Byelorussian SSR in 1950 elected 71,028 deputies, with 99.99% of the eligible voters participating and .11% voting against the bloc. The Kazakh SSR elected 53,219 deputies in 1947 and 57,481 deputies in 1950, with 99.99% of the eli-



gible voters participating; .95% voted against the bloc in 1947 and .24% in 1950. In the latter year 29,831 or 52% of the deputies elected were non-party. The estimated total number of voters in the USSR was 100,000,000.<sup>69</sup>

Detailed figures for the scratched ballots in the RSFSR, 1950, give the following (approximately 63,000,000 voters in RSFSR): scratched 1,118,218, invalid 7,995, for a total of 1,126,213. The figures for scratched and invalid ballots correspond roughly to the number of persons disenfranchised as unfriendly to the regime under the old electoral laws. In 65 rural soviet elections no majority of voters appeared; in 7 instances elections were illegally conducted, and in 6 districts no elections were held. It was stated that all of these would hold new elections.<sup>70</sup> An infinitesimal fraction of elections fail to meet the legal standard, according to these returns. In view of the character of the system it is fair to say that the candidate who does not bring out the required fifty percent of the voters for a legal election is a defeated candidate. Again the number is minute: in the RSFSR 84 as against 766,563 deputies legally elected in 1947, and 65 as against 806,744 in 1950.

A sample of returns for a city-raion soviet are those for the Bauman District Soviet, in the city of Moscow (1947 election): total number of deputies elected 202, of whom 40% were women; total number of party members was 117. The social composition was 71 workers, 68 engineers and employees of district institutions, 45 scientific and cultural professional workers (doctors, teachers, etc.), and 18 army personnel, housewives, and others.<sup>71</sup>

A final indication of the way in which the results show the character of the electoral system--i. e., a referendum on the regime--is provided by one of the returns from Moscow. It is, for the soviet citizen, a signal honor to be permitted to vote for the great leaders of his country. But with the single member district and no direct popular election of the heads of state corresponding to the American presidential elections, only the few individuals in the district where Stalin was a candidate in any given soviet's territory could

normally achieve the distinction of voting for him. The certificate of right to vote, enabling a citizen to vote in another than his home district, solves the problem. In the 1950 elections, at precinct #23 of the 90th District for the Moscow city soviet 3,038 ballots were cast, all for Stalin. The precinct's regular complement was 2000 voters, and in this instance over 1000 ballots were cast by certificate holders.<sup>72</sup> In the 2nd District for Moscow oblast soviet, for which Stalin stood in the same election, there were also many ballots cast by certificate holders resident in other cities and villages who went to the 2nd District specifically to be able to vote for Stalin. This sort of thing was a development of the post-1936 period, hardly conceivable in the twenties--the pantheonization of Stalin at the end of his life.

## CHAPTER III

### SOME COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS

The classic thesis of electoral reformers that direct election is less easy to manipulate than indirect is contradicted by soviet experience. Electoral laws since 1936, under a very highly centralized administration, are stacked in favor of the regime to a much higher degree than before. In the last analysis the pre-1936 electoral system depended upon local control. At the beginning the Bolsheviks did not have local control everywhere. By the 1930's they did have it, and they also had a carefully worked out technique for influencing elections. But in the law and in the system there was, in theory, nothing to prevent nomination and election of unforeseen candidates at the actual electoral assembly. The continued appearance of undesirable deputies in the elections through the 1920's attests this. Despite the elaborate preparations made before the electoral assembly convened, none of the pre-assembly steps to introduce candidates were legally binding.

Under the post-1936 election the electoral commissions, which are an element of the administrative hierarchy, determine, legally, not who votes, as before, but who runs. This decision cannot be upset at the polls. What makes for registration of differences in the electoral process is not in the law on elections but in the manner of selecting candidates and all the other preliminaries. In the law, as regards nominating, there is the presumption of different candidates only until you face the now constitutionally stated dominance of a single party in all social organizations. Before the formalization of the procedure after the adoption of the 1936 constitution the heaviest pressure might have to be applied at or after the election. Under the present system discreet pressure where necessary before nomination removes the necessity for overt police pressure at or after the election

of the chosen deputy. It is a much more efficient application of the pressure technique.

The direct elections have been held much less frequently. To be sure there was the internal crisis of the great purges and the external crisis of the German war to account for the failure to hold elections for many years. The new terms for deputies (four years for the supreme soviet of the union and the union republics, two years for local soviets) also lessen the number of elections required, as against the old system's annual election and one year terms. Elections extending over a period of several months every year must have been more difficult and more expensive than the new model. The campaign period is about fifty-five days, but it is practically coterminous all over the union and elections for any given level of soviet take place almost all at once. The practice of separating the soviets into three categories for purposes of conducting elections, so that only two or three ballots are required at any one time, multiplies the possibility of elections. There could have been--using 1937, 1938 and 1939, the actual dates of implementing the 1936 constitution for election of the union soviet, the republic soviets, and local soviets--fifteen elections through the end of 1951. There were nine. In February and March, 1953, elections were held again for local soviets, in 1954 for the union soviet, and in February and March, 1955, again for republic and local soviets, this time concurrently.

The knottiest problem, from the viewpoint of the non-soviet student of representative institutions, is the complete failure of soviet electoral systems, in practice, to provide multiple choice to the voter. In a sense, western criticism of the Soviet Union on this score is unjust, as it criticizes the soviets for failing to do something they never set out to do--regardless of western reading of soviet laws. A consistent analysis of constitutions, decrees, practice or anything else (see prefatory article of the 1918 RSFSR constitution) indicates that the electoral system was never intended to provide representation for differences of interest, as the American is. From the outset it was intended to provide

for the registration of community of interest on the part, first, of the new ruling proletarian class and its supporters, and second, the old class differentiations having been essentially eliminated, of all loyal soviet citizens. As such, the soviet electoral system is beautifully rigged.

### Centralization

In the soviet system the obligation is on the state to register the voter. Registration does not require the initiative of the individual voter, and centralized supervision over correct make-up of electoral lists is designed to insure that no citizen, for any reason, if legally entitled to vote, should be excluded for misunderstanding or slipshod work at local levels. In theory this is to protect one of the most fundamental aspects of socialist democracy.<sup>1</sup> Actually a much more ingenious principle is involved. The initiative is divided so as to put the responsibility for registering every citizen upon the state, and the responsibility for checking the completeness of registration and for participating in the subsequent election on the citizen. The passivity of non-participation is eliminated. In the American system where registration is not compulsory, and is at the initiative of the individual voter, the latter retains full control over his participation. If he chooses not to register--which he is free to do--he is not compelled to participate in the electoral process. The soviet voter has no choice on registration, and once registered pressure can be applied for participation. The soviet regime's attitude is that every citizen has the right to vote, and he shall exercise his right, whether he wants to or not.

In any election, for whatever level of soviets, it is clear from the selection of candidates and from the campaign that the only issue is patriotism. If you vote for the candidate you are a loyal citizen; if you do not vote, quite as much as if you scratch the ballot, you are an enemy of the regime. With complete registration there is no difficulty knowing who

does not vote. In fact if the ballot is completely secret an individual would be safer (and no less or more effective in changing the government or in showing opposition to it) scratching his ballot than not voting, which cannot be concealed. The problem of the secret ballot with the one man slate, from the standpoint of the regime, is to see that every voter appears at the polls, and from the standpoint of the voter, to circumvent the secret ballot so as to prove he was not one of the few who scratch ballots. On the one hand the regime has simplified the ballot--one office per ballot and one candidate per office--and facilitated the casting of ballots to the extreme. There are literally no inequities in voting privileges. Arranging for people to vote wherever they are is easy enough since no contests for office are involved and therefore the outcome cannot be affected by the precinct in which a voter actually shows up to ballot. You go to vote wherever you are--but you receive the ballot for the candidate in whose district you vote. There is no such thing as an "absentee ballot." The soviets have, of course, eliminated the corruption that such a roving electorate would mean in the United States by removing the stakes. On the other hand the citizen goes to the polls in the plainest and simplest demonstration of patriotism conceivable. Voting is a public rite.

Of the distinctive features of the soviet electoral system, the degree of centralization is certainly outstanding. Beginning with the instructions of 1925, centralization in the electoral process commences to dominate, in contrast to the earlier period when almost complete decentralization prevailed, with much local variation. Considerable regularization is evident in the 1929 campaigns, increasing until the present when irregularity is markedly absent. The variation in interpretation, the mistakes, the choices in candidates under the old election system--a system where it was possible for kulaks to become deputies when the law was designed to disenfranchise them had some element of choice--are all dissolved in the new election system where there is no question of choice, local jurisdiction or differentiation, but merely mass

rally. In matters electoral, the soviet citizen has been dra-gooned into uniformity.

Centralization in the electoral system must also be re-garded as one of the inevitable counterparts of centralization in the state generally. In the material field this phenomenon accompanied the growth of industrialization and the technolog-ical compulsion of planning under centralized state owner-ship. In the ideological field there is evident throughout soviet development a tendency to fix a pattern of orthodoxy in various branches of life from a central high authority on orthodoxy. Complete orthodoxy in all branches of life is not established at one fell swoop; the pattern develops in logical sequence. The development of the electoral system tends to bear out the thesis. It was not until after control of the instrument of power was secure--Stalin said the fif-teenth party congress (1927) marked the end of opposition in the party--that centralization began to engulf everything in social organization and state structure. And it was not until socialism in one country was secure that the electoral sys-tem was changed (1935-36) to better accommodate the cen-tralization that was then become complete. The orthodox rites of the citizen as voter are now established.

### Recall

Another distinctive feature of the soviet electoral sys-tem which, like centralization, is not unique but which has developed in singular manner, is the principle of recall of deputies. Recall is no mere formality in soviet practice. It was instituted, as soviet writers admit, in part because the Bolsheviks did not control all soviets in the early days of their administration.<sup>2</sup> As military and political power in an area was established, control of soviets followed "legal-ly" through recall, and through the frequency of annual e-lections. When the issue of control of soviets was no longer a vital one, however, the recall was retained as a discipli-

nary measure, which can be initiated by central authorities even for deputies in local soviets.

The good deputy, in soviet practice, is the busy deputy. Under the old election laws a deputy was expected to report to his electors once a month; if he failed to hold such frequent public forums the office was considered vacant. Even if he went through the motions he was not safe, as his constituents could recall him--or the political powers might see that his constituents recalled him--if he were not sufficiently active in his duties. "Passivity" was the cardinal sin in a deputy, and when it appeared the procedure for eliminating the culprit was similar to an election in reverse. An assembly of voters was called and the action of the assembly on the proposal to recall recorded in the same way as for election of deputies. The forms used provided only two columns for indicating the reason for recall: "Passivity," and "other reasons."<sup>3</sup>

After the new constitution the principle of recall remained, and its chief purpose was unchanged--to combat passivity. The initiative may be taken for recall either by social groups (voters) in the district of the offending deputy, or by higher organs of powers, who set in motion the action by voters of the district concerned.<sup>4</sup>

### The Deputy-Constituent Relationship

The principle of recall raises the complicated question of deputy-constituent relationship. A theory widely held in Anglo-Saxon countries maintains that the elected deputy represents, or ought to represent, the common interest of the community in whose council he serves--nation, province, borough or other--and not simply the immediate and narrow interest of the territorial district which elects him. Once elected he should be free to vote on the common interest as his conscience dictates, and not act primarily as a lobbyist for his constituents, or some faction among them. As any



politically literate citizen in America knows, this theory is often quite remote from the practice. But in any case the privileges and immunities of the deputy, by this theory, are coincident with the sessions of the body to which he belongs, and the terms of his commission are sometimes set by law even to the hour.

The soviet view of the deputy-constituent relationship specifically discards such a "bourgeois" theory.<sup>5</sup> The soviet elected deputy is the servant of the people in a very literal sense.<sup>6</sup> He is the direct representative of the people who elect him, i. e., of a limited electoral district, and is expected to work directly for their interests. These interests are conceived, however, as common with the interests of people in other districts because of the theoretical absence of class conflict. Therefore representing the interests of constituents consists largely in seeing that the stated official program is implemented in practice. The deputy is at the same time an agent of the central authorities in propagating the official program. Upon election as deputy the individual does not cease working in his regular job; he is expected to continue setting the kind of example in his regular work that won him nomination for deputy in the first place. According to soviet theory the tie between deputy and constituents remains very close because he continues to work as usual, and this continuing close tie insures the truly representative character of deputies. The fact that deputies are and continue to be workers first, requires that formal sessions of soviets be brief, in order not to take too much time from work.<sup>7</sup>

There are two times when a soviet deputy's rights begin, which do not coincide, and this is because of his multiple role. When the election is completed and the electoral commission certifies the results, his obligations to carry out the instructions of the electors as expressed in the assemblies held during the pre-election campaign begin. He thus has an opportunity to start working for his constituents at once. Only when the body to which he is elected meets does he have the first opportunity to carry out the function of a deputy in de-

ciding questions of government. He can, in other words, start jacking up the administrative work as soon as the election is over, but he can only work on policy when the soviet meets. For example, a deputy named Sarafonova was elected to the Kiev city-raion soviet in the city of Moscow on December 21, 1947. By December 28 she had already started to work with the department of public instruction on the examination of the causes for neglect of certain school business which had been pointed out by her electors in pre-election meetings.<sup>8</sup> From the moment of election the deputy has at his disposal the privileges and the funds necessary for carrying out his duties. He is not salaried as a deputy; the primary purpose of the funds at his disposal is to enable him to carry out state functions--an expense account only.

Each soviet, at the first session following election of a new body, elects from its own deputies a mandate commission. The mandate commission either recognizes the credentials or annuls the election of individual deputies. Thus the annulment of elections is entirely within the control of the electoral commission or the soviet itself. The soviet theory is that it is anti-democratic to have elections annulled by court action, as is true in Anglo-Saxon countries.<sup>9</sup> This stems, probably, from the soviet view of courts as a class weapon frankly used as such; the concept of courts as an extra-class instrument dispensing equal justice for all is not admitted. Equal justice for enemies of the state would be foreign to the theory.

The newly elected deputies, holding organizational meetings and examining credentials through mandate commissions, operate on a presumption of the legality of elections. The experience of over thirty years, during which the overwhelming number of elections were found valid, justifies the presumption.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless the order of operating is: first, opening of the session (by the executive committee of the outgoing soviet), election of presiding officers, adoption of rules, adoption of the order of the day for the session, election of mandate commission. Only after acceptance of the

latter's report can business be acted upon. The final step is the deputy's certificate, which is given by the executive committee of the local soviet, signed by the president and secretary.

The looseness of elector-deputy relationships under which the elector's part ceases when he has cast his ballot--which the soviets aver characterizes bourgeois electoral systems<sup>11</sup>--and where the deputy's obligations are limited to service in the parliament or council, is not permitted in soviet practice. Continuing relationship between elector and deputy is required, thus providing a constant pulse-tapping channel between center and local community. To be sure, in the much maligned Anglo-Saxon system the deputy who wants to be re-elected will be forced, by competition of those who would replace him, to maintain a continuing relationship with his constituents. But he is not required by law to do anything, and the legal recall by popular referendum is by no means universal. The soviet system, having removed the competitive spur as an enforcement of continuing elector-deputy relationship, requires periodic reports to constituents and uses the recall universally as the whip to assure observance. In the character of the soviet system the recalled deputy is in much the same category as the elector who does not ballot--he is an unpatriotic citizen, potentially suspect.

### The Principle of Unanimity

Stalin, in an election eve speech on February 10, 1946, made the statement: "I consider that the electoral campaign is the trial court of the electors for the Communist party, as a ruling party."<sup>12</sup> The entire system, in other words, is based on the theory of complete popular sovereignty. This theory is alleged as the reason for the particular order of organizing electoral commissions, of nominating candidates, and for the decision by majority vote in an election where a

majority of eligible electors ballots.<sup>13</sup>

According to soviet theory, the people and the electoral corpus are one. Furthermore, there is no separation, in theory, of electoral laws or rights and of legislative or executive functions. Elected bodies do not become legal entities enjoying one or other of these rights independently of a people, whose participation is limited to electoral rights. Elected bodies are not composed of representatives who have become independent of their electorate and can act in the name of the people. Elected bodies are the people, exercising their other rights.<sup>14</sup> The recall principle assures the theory that deputies remain at all times part of the original corpus, and do not acquire rights as members of elected bodies separate from the electoral corpus. The principle that with the election the role of the elector ceases, that the elector acts as such only on election day, is the reverse of the theory of the soviet union. By the American system electors delegate their rights as sovereign people to elected deputies. No such delegation is intended nor implied in soviet theory.

For the striking philosophical emphasis on the fusion of state (an apparatus) and people in the soviet period there is an important background in Slavophile doctrine. The Russian election system, where it is not the full-blown creation of a new regime--i. e., in its theoretical aspects and not in its technical aspects--harks back not to a time when, as in the west, protection of divergent interests in a feudal society were at stake, but to a time when the individual's participation in common interest was to be decided. The feudal corporation, or even the feudal vassal, had independent rights even as against the state, monarch or suzerain. The Russian commune, on the other hand, had to decide how the whole community, as such, would meet obligations. The relationship was not of an individual to the state but of a group to the state, and the group had to stand as such, not as a series of individuals each with a private quarrel with the state--and thus perhaps with some of his fellows. The old Russian Slavophile doctrine that in the true Russian com-

munity the state (zemlia) and the people (narod) are one is closely analogous to the soviet doctrine. Theoretically the conflict between electors and deputy, between center and locality, between individual and society, cannot exist where there is fusion of these interests as in the soviet state with its combination of political and economic organization, its absence of an exploiting class, its one legal party. Therefore the representative system of the soviets resolves, in a way not done by any other state, the combination of public interest and electors' interest.<sup>15</sup>

The whole concept of democracy as the rule of the people, for the soviets, is that the people as such (narod) speaks with one voice--the voice of rule cannot be divided or it is not the voice of authority. And if the voice of the people is to be the voice of all of them, and not just a part, however important--such as the workers, or some other social division--there must be all of the paraphernalia of universality as well as unanimity. Electoral contests, in the soviet view, are an aberration of bourgeois countries, and reflect class differences. The soviets stated, in connection with the 1936 constitution, that class differences had ceased to exist, substantially, therefore there had to be universality of participation and unanimity in election results. The law provides the technical machinery for universality, the practice of the party and non-party bloc on a single slate provides the machinery for unanimity.

In the Soviet Union there must be great emphasis on the forms rather than the substance of political concepts, for the present, since without the forms the soviet citizen has nothing.<sup>16</sup> The soviets, when describing their theory and institutions, are forever making comparisons with bourgeois countries. All the talk about democracy would be worse than baseless if the soviets did not have the best democratic forms ever put on paper. It is a part of the whole soviet outlook on life that the soviet society has eliminated the evils of other societies and has in better form whatever of good can be salvaged. The soviet citizen of the thirties who was working to industrialize his country and "over-

take America'' could point to the concrete achievements, such as the Dnepropetrovsk dam and power plant, and all the new construction of the first and second five year plans as proof of the potentialities of his system. The soviet citizen who wants to see concrete proof of the superiority of his institutions can point to his constitution and his electoral law as the concrete forms of complete democracy.

Yet the average American does not believe the average Russian has any democracy at all. It is a fact that in both the United States and the USSR the law is expected to provide machinery for the total participation of the populace in the electoral process. That common objective is matched by many common features in the laws regarding elections, which should not be surprising. But the forms, which are so important to us both, not only do not but must not be expected to express the same grasp of the same idea. Are not our conceptions of election and representation based on a set of medieval concepts carried over through certain conflicts between the centralized monarchical state on the one hand and feudal decentralized groups and ''sovereign'' individuals on the other? An elaborate set of parliamentary forms was evolved in the process and we still do our business by those forms without too oppressive a feeling of anachronism. When we put a matter to vote we speak of taking a division. Our system evolved out of disagreement, and we developed an agreement as to the forms by which we would register our disagreements. Even when we do not expect any disagreement, we use the same form.

The sovereign individual--a concept nurtured in an agrarian, pre-industrial-revolution society--is an anachronism. In our highly industrialized society only a minority of individuals operating for the most part on the fringes of the industrialized economy, are sufficiently lacking in dependence upon their fellows to be sovereign. The soviet conception of elections and representation is not based on any such anachronistic idea as the separatist sovereign individual. The soviets, however repulsive the idea to us, have entirely other concepts of community sovereignty and

and community will be based on their theory of social interdependence in an industrial society. They have, as do we, the utopian ideal of improvement of individuals--but not as individuals, rather as members of an improved community.

We have had popular elections for generations. We have come to believe that the substance of democracy is not in the antiquated forms of organization but rather the spirit in which they are approached. Most important, perhaps, is that having decided on the forms to use we will abide by the consequences and not resort to force or arbitrariness when the results, obtained by following the forms, go against us. The Russians are new at popular elections; they use the same terms in them that we do, but we should judge their use of the terms not by the practices we engage in now but rather the practices we resorted to when those terms were new to us. The analogy would be much closer in the degree to which the use or threat of force determined the working of the forms.

While it is desirable in both soviet and American electoral systems to have full participation by the electorate in all elections, it is not essential in the American. Elections are not only to provide representation of differences but to delegate authority to act. And the system can operate on sufferance if there are those who disdain participation. They are not and are not assumed to be insurrectionary if they do not vote; they would not be denied the vote if they attempted to use it. The system can function in this way because the election is held in areas of division and can show the same ratio of results whether 10 percent or 100 percent of the voters appear at the polls.<sup>17</sup>

The soviet system is not so. If you do not vote you oppose the system; there is no provision for abstentions. The peculiarity of the soviet system is not that machinery is not provided for election contests--it is--but that due to local circumstances contest never develops at the ballot stage. The extension of such a political monopoly as the bloc of party and non-party Bolsheviks enjoys everywhere in the USSR to a single political party in any area in the

United States would bring the same result. In fact, unofficially, such a situation has often developed: the idea that contested elections are an essential feature of our democratic way of life is a fable--as unopposed candidates for Cook County (Illinois) judgeships, or candidates for many Cook County districts in the state legislature can witness.<sup>18</sup>

We tend to assume that the soviet system of institutions is all of a piece, that it may not have contradictions or inconsistencies. But it can and does. Events have long since outstripped the simple slogan "the dictatorship of the proletariat." With the abolition of classes, in theory, and the transformation of all into workers, the vanguard position of the proletariat has been engulfed in the ranks of the toiling masses. Therefore a mechanism for administering the affairs of the toiling masses--although there is no more vanguard proletariat there is of course a vanguard party--is required. The soviet state as now constructed is this mechanism and the electoral machinery is adapted to it. In view of the electoral emphasis before 1936 on the exclusion of those who live by exploiting others or on unearned income, the transition in the 1936 constitution to universal suffrage implied very strongly not only that parasitic categories had been eliminated but also that the compulsion of all to work would be, in the new society, a permanent feature insuring the continued right of all to participate in the electoral process.

Soviet literature on the eve of elections repeats over and over that only the overwhelming election of the Stalinist bloc of party and non-party Bolsheviks will show the unity of purpose and of mind, and the solidarity, of the socialist state against the world.<sup>19</sup> The soviet insistence on unity and the amalgamation of all workers' parties has an old logic--united we stand, divided we fall. The claim that more rapid and more efficient achievement is possible in unity than in diversity has reality and probably some actual appeal. To bolster this there is always some distinction about the people nominated to serve as candidates--to be the pedestaled representatives of the soviets' success



during the elections and afterward. The repeated statement "we must send our best sons and daughters to the soviets" is not an empty slogan. The candidate selected is one who will do honor to the soviet system, and is himself honored in the choice. The best workers, the factory manager, the popular artist, the best teacher, these are a credit to society--and along with them sits the housewife, to show the inclusiveness of the system.<sup>20</sup>

And in the last analysis the best test of the extent to which a set of institutions is democratic in substance as well as form is what it accomplishes for people. The principle is well put in a note published in Ogonek entitled "The best report of a city soviet" (to its constituents). After describing a trip through the city of Voronezh, stressing the reconstruction accomplished, and the fine paved streets, the reporter writes: "And Voronezh--the city as it is, and the restoration of its streets--this is the best report on its work which the city soviet could present to its electorate."<sup>21</sup>

The soviet electoral system accomplishes something of fundamental importance by providing the soviet citizen with a sense of participation. It takes nearly ten million people simply to staff the hundreds of thousands of electoral boards in precincts in all parts of the Soviet Union on any election day. These individuals do not have any control over the government, but for the moment they are actually a part of the machinery. And this is not because they are all party members; the estimated six to seven million members of the Communist party would not suffice to staff the electoral boards required. No matter what intellectuals may say about the reality of a citizen's participation in soviet government, the millions who serve the government and the party through the electoral machinery have a feeling of participation. The millions more who cast ballots in an all but unanimous endorsement of the government and the party must be conscious, if only by virtue of the emphasis placed upon their action by their leaders, that they are part of a community. These millions of voters do not make valid decisions on the operation of their government, but they

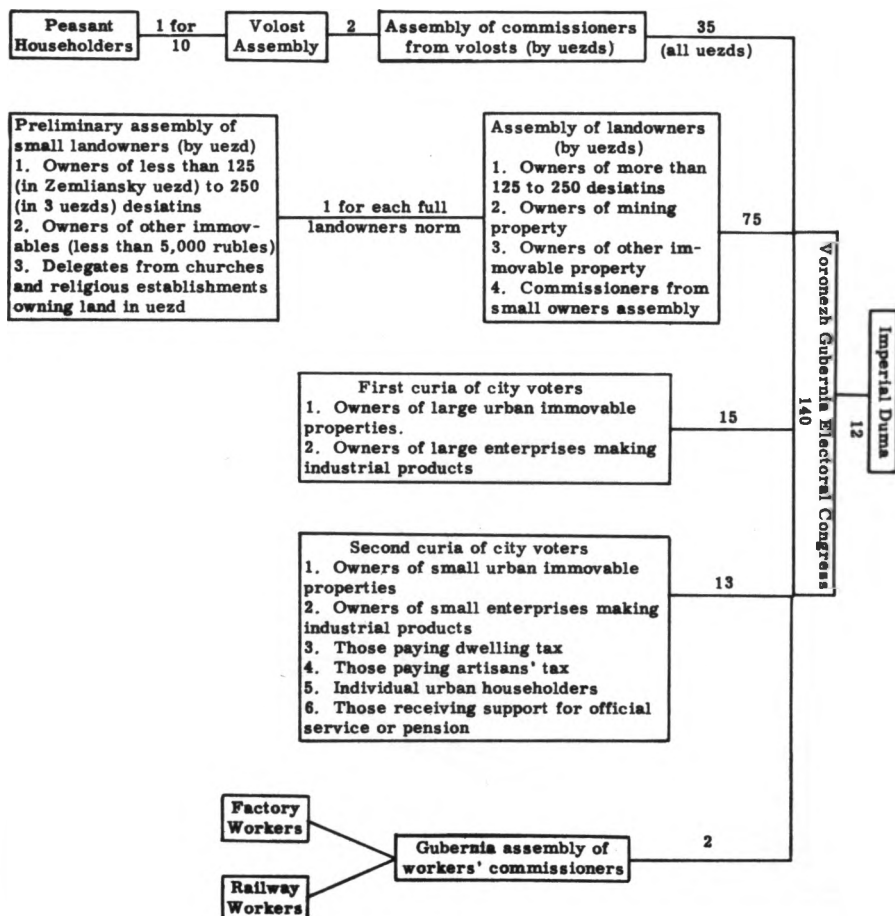
are allowed to feel that they are consulted, and to feel that they have participated.

The great majority of the citizens of the USSR are simple people. Most of us cannot put ourselves in a Russian's place to look at his institutions: we are much too sophisticated, politically and socially speaking. There is an old saw about a lost mule, which nobody could find until the village idiot located the animal. When asked how he found the mule, the idiot answered that he just thought where he would go if he were a mule and went there to look. To think like a Russian about elections we have to think simply, as one who does not remember, or has not learned, the long experience of the human race in politics. But if the Russians continue to go through the forms of elections, they must eventually learn some of the inherent possibilities--unless they are all congenital idiots.

The reason why people do not vote is often relatively easy to discover; it may be single and simple. Why people do vote is usually far more difficult to explain; it is a complex of reasons, no one of which would be sufficient without the others. The soviet citizen votes for the same reason that his fellows in other constitutional states vote--by tradition, from habit, because it is his only opportunity, however limited or restricted, for direct participation in the processes of government, because of social pressure, sense of duty, patriotism--plus a few more that not all voters share, such as the implied terrorism of the police state. The present system of elections insures the dictatorship of the vanguard party, as the pre-1936 system insured the dictatorship of the vanguard class. The dialectical logic of development for the future would be the admission of all to the party, as in the past all citizens without exception were admitted to the single class of toilers. A party which included all citizens would not be the same party as the disciplined, elite, revolutionary brotherhood of Lenin's conception and Stalin's practice. And if the party changes, anything in Russia can change--even the electoral practices under a model election law.

CHART A

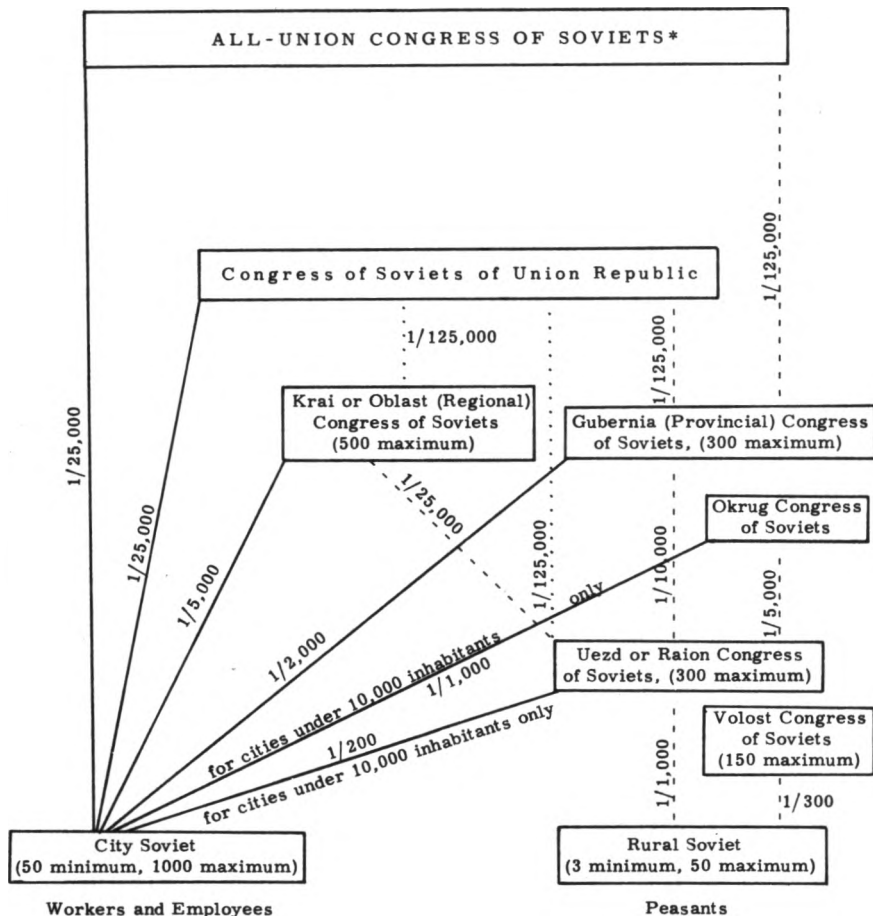
Electoral Procedure in Voronezh Gubernia under Law of 1907 (12 uyezds)



## CHART B

## Indirect Electoral Procedure, USSR prior to 1936

Figures on solid lines show representational norms per number of voters  
 Figures on broken lines show representational norms per number of inhabitants  
 Dotted lines show alternate basis of selection of delegates in some Union Republics



\*Representation for nationalities in the All-Union Congress, which was on the basis of 5 from each union republic or autonomous republic and 1 from each autonomous region, is not shown.

## Universal, Equal, Direct Elections, USSR 1955

SUPREME SOVIET OF THE USSR  
(4 year term)

Supreme Soviet of a Union Republic  
(4 year term)

(all others 2 year term)

Autonomous Oblast  
Soviet

National Region  
(Okrug) Soviet

Supreme Soviet of Autono-  
mous Republic (4 year term)

City Soviet  
(Major city with ward division)

City-ward Soviet

Oblast  
Soviet

Raion  
Soviet

City Soviet

Rural Soviet

Electorate, composed of all citizens over the age of 18. Each voter ballots directly for deputies to all soviets within whose jurisdiction he is located.

## APPENDIX

### STATUTE ON LOCAL ELECTIONS ADOPTED BY THE PRESIDIUM OF THE SUPREME SOVIET OF THE RSFSR OCTOBER 8, 1947

Statute on elections to krai, oblast, okrug, raion, city, rural and non-urban soviets of working people's deputies in the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (RSFSR)

#### Chapter I

##### The Electoral System

Article 1. In accordance with Article 138 of the Constitution of the RSFSR, deputies to krai and oblast soviets of working people's deputies, to soviets of working people's deputies in autonomous oblasts and national okrugs, to raion, city, rural and non-urban soviets of working people's deputies, are elected on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot.

Article 2. In accordance with Article 139 of the Constitution of the RSFSR, deputies are elected on the basis of universal suffrage: all citizens of the RSFSR over the age of 18, regardless of race or national origin, sex, religion, educational qualification, residential qualification, social origin, property ownership or previous occupation, have the right to participate in the election of deputies and to be elected to the soviets of working people's deputies, with the exception of the insane and persons under court conviction carrying deprivation of electoral rights.

Article 3. In accordance with Article 140 of the Constitution of the RSFSR, Deputies are elected on the basis of equal suffrage: each citizen has one vote; all citizens participate in the elections on equal terms.

Article 4. In accordance with Article 141 of the Consti-

tution of the RSFSR, women participate in elections and may be elected on an equal basis with men.

Article 5. In accordance with Article 142 of the Constitution of the RSFSR, citizens serving in the Armed Forces of the USSR enjoy equal rights to vote and be elected with any other citizen.

Article 6. In accordance with Article 143 of the Constitution of the RSFSR, election of deputies is direct: elections to krai and oblast soviets of working people's deputies, to the soviets of working people's deputies of autonomous oblasts and national okrugs, to raion, city, rural and non-urban soviets of working people's deputies are accomplished by the citizens through direct vote.

Article 7. In accordance with Article 144 of the Constitution of the RSFSR, voting for the election of deputies to soviets of working people's deputies in the RSFSR is by secret ballot.

Article 8. In accordance with Article 18 of the Constitution of the RSFSR, citizens of all other union republics enjoy in the territory of the RSFSR the same right to vote and be elected to soviets of working people's deputies in the RSFSR as citizens of the RSFSR.

Article 9. Persons living in the territory of the RSFSR but not citizens of the USSR, and citizens or subjects of foreign states, do not have the right to take part in elections or be elected to the soviets of working people's deputies in the RSFSR.

Article 10. In accordance with Article 145 of the Constitution of the RSFSR, elections to the soviets of working people's deputies in the RSFSR are conducted by electoral districts.

One deputy is elected from each electoral district for the corresponding soviet of working people's deputies.

Article 11. The manner of conducting elections to the soviets of working people's deputies in autonomous republics is defined in the statute on elections to the soviets of working people's deputies for the corresponding autonomous republics.

Article 12. All expenses connected with the conduct of elections to soviets of working people's deputies in the RSFSR are paid by the state.

## Chapter II

### Voters Registration Lists

Article 13. Voters registration lists shall include all citizens enjoying electoral rights and residing, either permanently or temporarily, in the territory of the given soviet at the time the lists are compiled, who will reach the age of eighteen years before the date of the election.

Article 14. No voter's name may be included on more than one voters registration list.

Article 15. Voters registration lists shall not include the name of any person deprived of electoral rights by court conviction during the term for which electoral rights were suspended in the court decision, nor of any person declared insane through the established legal procedure.

Article 16. Voters registration lists shall be compiled in cities by the executive committee of the city soviet of working people's deputies, in cities with ward organization by the executive committees of the ward soviets, in non-urban settlements by the executive committees of the non-urban soviets, in rural localities by the executive committees of the rural (village, Cossack village, farmstead settlement, mountain village) soviets of working people's deputies.

Article 17. Voters registration lists for members of military units or military type formations shall be compiled under the direction of the commander. All other service personnel shall be entered on the voters registration list for their place of residence by the corresponding executive committees of soviets of working people's deputies.

Article 18. Voters registration lists, identical for the elections to all soviets of working people's deputies [i. e., krai, oblast, etc.] shall be compiled for each electoral pre-



cinct on forms prescribed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR in alphabetical order, showing family name, given name, patronymic, age, residence address, and also the numbers of the electoral districts for elections to the corresponding soviet of working people's deputies. Voters registration lists shall be signed by the president and secretary of the executive committee of the soviet of working people's deputies.

Article 19. At least 35 days before the elections the executive committee of the soviet of working people's deputies shall post the voters registration lists for general inspection or provide opportunity for the voters to become familiar with the lists on the premises of the soviet or of the electoral precinct.

Article 20. The original of voters registration lists shall be preserved by the corresponding executive committee of the soviet of working people's deputies, troop unit, or military formation.

Article 21. In case a voter changes place of residence during the period between the publication of the voters registration list and the day of the elections, the corresponding executive committee of the soviet of working people's deputies shall provide the voter, on a form prescribed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR, with a "Certificate of right to vote" and shall note on the voters registration list "moved"; at the new place of residence (permanent or temporary) the voter shall be entered on the voters registration list upon presentation of "Certificate of right to vote" and also personal identification.

Article 22. Complaints on irregularities in the voters registration lists (failure to include on the list, removal from the list, error in family name, given name, or patronymic, illegal inclusion on the list of persons deprived of electoral rights) shall be presented to the executive committee of the soviet of working people's deputies which published the list, which said executive committee must, within a period of three days examine each complaint regarding irregularities in the voters registration list.

Article 23. After examination of a complaint regarding irregularity in the voters registration list the executive committee of the soviet of working people's deputies shall either make the necessary correction in the voters registration list or provide the complainant with written explanation of the reasons for rejecting the complaint.

Article 24. If the complainant does not accept the decision of the executive committee of the soviet of working people's deputies regarding irregularity in the voters registration list, the complainant may petition the People's Court, which shall then, within a period of three days, in open session and with the complainant as well as a representative of the executive committee of the soviet present, examine the petition and advise both the complainant and the executive committee of the soviet of working people's deputies of the court's decision at once. The decision of the People's Court shall be final.

### Chapter III

Electoral Districts and Electoral Commissions for Elections to Krai, Oblast Soviets of Working People's Deputies, and to Soviets of Working People's Deputies in Autonomous Oblasts

Article 25. Electoral districts for elections to krai and oblast soviets of working people's deputies shall be drawn up by the corresponding executive committees of krai, and oblast soviets of working people's deputies.

In accordance with Article 145 of the Constitution of the RSFSR, electoral districts shall be drawn in conformity to the following norms:

a) For elections to krai soviets of working people's deputies:

In krajs with a population of less than 1,500,000--one electoral district for each 11,000 inhabitants;

In krajs with a population of more than 1,500,000--one electoral district for each 15,000 inhabitants;

b) For elections to oblast soviets of working people's

deputies:

In oblasts with a population between 500,000 and 900,000--one electoral district for each 8,000 inhabitants; in oblasts with a population of less than 500,000 there shall be 70 electoral districts;

In oblasts with a population between 900,000 and 1,000,000--one electoral district for each 10,000 inhabitants;

In oblasts with a population between 1,000,000 and 1,500,000--one electoral district for each 11,000 inhabitants;

In oblasts with a population between 1,500,000 and 1,900,000--one electoral district for each 12,000 inhabitants;

In oblasts with a population between 1,900,000 and 2,100,000--one electoral district for each 13,000 inhabitants;

In oblasts with a population between 2,100,000 and 2,500,000--one electoral district for each 14,000 inhabitants;

In oblasts with a population between 2,500,000 and 3,500,000--one electoral district for each 15,000 inhabitants;

In oblasts with a population of 3,500,000 and above--one electoral district for each 30,000 inhabitants;

c) For elections to oblast soviets of working people's deputies in autonomous oblasts:

In autonomous oblasts with a population of less than 150,000--one electoral district for each 1,500 inhabitants;

In autonomous oblasts with a population of more than 150,000--one electoral district for each 3,000 inhabitants.

Article 26. Descriptions of electoral districts for elections to krai and oblast soviets of working people's deputies shall be published by the executive committees of krai and oblast soviets of working people's deputies at least 55 days prior to the election.

Article 27. In each krai and oblast shall be organized a corresponding Krai or Oblast Electoral Commission for elections to krai and oblast soviets of working people's deputies.

Krai and oblast electoral commissions are composed of representatives from trade union organizations of workers and employees, cooperative organizations, Communist party organizations, organizations of youth, from cultural, techni-

cal and scientific societies and other social organizations and societies of the working people legally recognized, and also from assemblies of workers and employees meeting according to enterprise or institution, from assemblies of members of the armed services meeting by military unit, from assemblies of peasants meeting by kolkhoz or village, and from assemblies of workers and employees of sovkhozes meeting by sovkhoz.

Article 28. Krai and oblast electoral commissions shall consist of a president, vice-president, secretary and 8 to 10 members, and shall be confirmed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR not later than 55 days before the election.

Article 29, Krai and oblast electoral commissions shall:

a) Supervise the strict observance of the present law in the conduct of elections for krai and oblast soviets of working people's deputies throughout the territory of the krai or oblast;

b) Investigate complaints concerning illegal activities of electoral commissions and make definitive settlement thereof;

c) Prepare ballots for elections to krai and oblast soviets of working people's deputies in the form prescribed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR;

d) Register the duly elected deputies of krai and oblast soviets of working people's deputies;

e) Deliver to the mandate commissions of krai and oblast soviets of working people's deputies the records concerning the elections.

Article 30. In each electoral district for elections to krai and oblast soviets of working people's deputies a District Electoral Commission shall be organized.

District electoral commissions are composed of representatives from trade union organizations of workers and employees, cooperative organizations, Communist party organizations, organizations of youth, from cultural, technical and scientific societies and other social organizations and

societies of the working people legally recognized, and also from assemblies of workers and employees meeting according to enterprise or institution, from assemblies of members of the armed services meeting by military unit, from assemblies of peasants meeting by kolkhoz or village, and from assemblies of workers and employees of sovkhozes meeting by sovkhoz.

Article 31. District electoral commissions for elections to krai and oblast soviets of working people's deputies shall consist of a president, vice-president, secretary and 4 to 6 members, and shall be confirmed by the executive committee of the krai or oblast soviet of working people's deputies at least 50 days prior to elections.

Article 32. District electoral commissions for elections to krai and oblast soviets of working people's deputies shall:

- a) Establish the required number of electoral precincts;
- b) Register candidates for deputy nominated in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution of the RSFSR and of the present statute on elections;
- c) Supply ballots of the correct form to the precinct electoral commissions;
- d) Ascertain the results of elections in the district;
- e) Deliver to the krai or oblast electoral commission all materials concerning the results of elections in the district;
- f) Present the duly elected deputy with a certificate of election;
- g) Turn over the business correspondence for preservation by the executive committee of the corresponding krai or oblast soviet of working people's deputies.

#### Chapter IV

#### Electoral Districts and Electoral Commissions for Elections to Okrug Soviets of Working People's Deputies in National Okrugs

Article 33. The formation of electoral districts for elections to soviets of working people's deputies of national okrugs shall be determined by the executive committees of okrug soviets of working people's deputies.

In accordance with Article 145 of the Constitution of the RSFSR, electoral districts shall be drawn in conformity to the following norms:

In national okrugs with a population of more than 40,000--one electoral district for each 1,000 inhabitants, with a maximum of 65 electoral districts; in national okrugs with a population of less than 40,000 there shall be 40 electoral districts.

Article 34. Description of electoral districts for elections to soviets of deputies of working people's deputies in national okrugs shall be published by the executive committees of okrug soviets of working people's deputies at least 55 days prior to the election.

Article 35. In each national okrug shall be organized an Okrug Electoral Commission for elections to okrug soviets of working people's deputies in national okrugs.

Okrug (in national okrugs) electoral commissions are composed of representatives from trade union organizations of workers and employees, cooperative organizations, Communist party organizations, organizations of youth, from cultural, technical and scientific societies and other social organizations and societies of the working people legally recognized, and also from assemblies of workers and employees meeting according to enterprise or institution, from assemblies of members of the armed services meeting by military unit, from assemblies of peasants meeting by kolkhoz or village, and from assemblies of workers and employees of sovkhozes meeting by sovkhoz.

Article 36. Okrug (in national okrugs) electoral commissions shall consist of a president, vice-president, secretary and 4 to 6 members, and shall be confirmed by the executive committees of krai or oblast soviets of working people's deputies at least 55 days prior to the election.

Article 37. Okrug (in national okrugs) electoral com-

missions shall:

a) Supervise the strict observance of the present law in the conduct of elections for okrug soviets of working people's deputies throughout the territory of the okrug;

b) Examine complaints concerning illegal activities of electoral commissions for elections to okrug soviets of working people's deputies;

c) Prepare ballots for elections to okrug soviets of working people's deputies in the form prescribed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR;

d) Register the duly elected deputies of okrug soviets of working people's deputies;

e) Deliver to the mandate commission of the okrug soviet of working people's deputies the records concerning elections.

Article 38. In each electoral district for elections to okrug soviets of working people's deputies in national okrugs a District Electoral Commission shall be organized.

District electoral commissions are composed of representatives from trade union organizations of workers and employees, cooperative organizations, Communist party organizations, organizations of youth, from cultural, technical and scientific societies and other social organizations and societies of the working people legally recognized, and also from assemblies of workers and employees meeting according to enterprise or institution, from assemblies of members of the armed services meeting by military unit, from assemblies of peasants meeting by kolkhoz or village, and from assemblies of workers and employees of sovkhoses meeting by sovkhos.

Article 39. District electoral commissions for elections to okrug soviets of working people's deputies shall consist of a president, vice-president, secretary and 2 to 4 members, and shall be confirmed by the executive committee of the okrug soviet of working people's deputies at least 50 days prior to the election.

Article 40. District electoral commissions for elections to okrug soviets of working people's deputies shall:

- a) Register candidates for deputy nominated in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution of the RSFSR and the present statute on elections;
- b) Supply ballots of the correct form to the precinct electoral commissions;
- c) Ascertain the results of the elections in the district;
- d) Deliver to the okrug electoral commission all materials concerning the results of elections in the district;
- e) Present the duly elected deputy with a certificate of election;
- f) Turn over the business correspondence for preservation by the executive committee of the corresponding okrug soviet of working people's deputies.

## Chapter V

### Electoral Districts and Electoral Commissions for Elections to Raion Soviets of Working People's Deputies

Article 41. The formation of electoral districts for election to raion soviets of working people's deputies shall be determined by the executive committees of raion soviets of working people's deputies.

In accordance with Article 145 of the Constitution of the RSFSR, electoral districts shall be drawn in conformity to the following norms:

In a raion with a population of more than 25,000--one electoral district for each 1,000 inhabitants, but not more than 60 districts; in a raion with a population of less than 25,000 there shall be 25 electoral districts.

Article 42. Descriptions of electoral districts for elections to raion soviets of working people's deputies shall be published by the executive committees of raion soviets of working people's deputies at least 55 days prior to the elections.

Article 43. In each raion shall be organized a Raion Electoral Commission for the election to the raion soviet of working people's deputies.



Raion electoral commissions are composed of representatives from trade union organizations of workers and employees, cooperative organizations, Communist party organizations, organizations of youth, from cultural, technical and scientific societies and other social organizations and societies of the working people legally recognized, and also from assemblies of workers and employees meeting according to enterprise or institution, from assemblies of members of the armed services meeting by military unit, from assemblies of peasants meeting by kolkhoz or village, and from assemblies of workers and employees of sovkhozes meeting by sovkhoz.

Article 44. Raion electoral commissions shall consist of a president, vice-president, secretary and 4 to 6 members, and shall be confirmed by the executive committees of krai or oblast soviets of working people's deputies at least 55 days prior to the elections.

Article 45. Raion electoral commissions shall:

- a) Supervise the strict observance of the present law in the conduct of elections to raion soviets of working people's deputies throughout the territory of the raion;
- b) Examine complaints concerning illegal activities of electoral commissions for election to raion soviets of working people's deputies;
- c) See that the voters registration lists are up to date and brought to general notice;
- d) See that revision of precinct boundaries is kept up to date by the executive committees of soviets of working people's deputies;
- e) Prepare ballots for election to the raion soviet of working people's deputies in the form prescribed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR;
- f) Register the duly elected deputies of the raion soviet of working people's deputies;
- g) Deliver to the mandate commission of the raion soviet of working people's deputies the business correspondence concerning the election.

Article 46. In each electoral district for election to

the raion soviet of working people's deputies a District Electoral Commission shall be organized.

District electoral commissions are composed of representatives from trade union organizations of workers and employees, cooperative organizations, Communist party organizations, organizations of youth, from cultural, technical and scientific societies and other social organizations and societies of the working people legally recognized, and also from assemblies of workers and employees meeting according to enterprise or institution, from assemblies of members of the armed services meeting by military unit, from assemblies of peasants meeting by kolkhoz or village, and from assemblies of workers and employees of sovkhozes meeting by sovkhoz.

Article 47. District electoral commissions for election to the raion soviet of working people's deputies shall consist of a president, vice-president, secretary and 2 to 4 members, and shall be confirmed by the executive committee of the raion soviet of working people's deputies at least 50 days prior to the election.

Article 48. District electoral commissions for elections to the raion soviet of working people's deputies shall;

a) Register candidates for deputy duly nominated in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution of the RSFSR and the present statute on elections;

b) Supply ballots of the correct form to the precinct electoral commissions;

c) Ascertain the results of the election in the district;

d) Deliver to the raion electoral commission all materials concerning the results of the elections in the district;

e) Present the duly elected deputy with a certificate of election;

f) Turn over the business correspondence for preservation by the executive committee of the corresponding raion soviet of working people's deputies.

## Chapter VI

## Electoral Districts and Electoral Commissions for Election to City and City-ward Soviets of Working People's Deputies

Article 49. The formation of electoral districts for election to city and city-ward soviets of working people's deputies shall be determined by the corresponding executive committees of city and city-ward soviets of working people's deputies.

In accordance with Article 145 of the Constitution of the RSFSR, electoral districts shall be drawn in conformity to the following norms:

In cities with a population of between 12,000 and 100,000--one electoral district for each 350 inhabitants, but not more than 250 districts; in cities with a population of less than 12,000 there shall be 35 electoral districts;

In cities with a population of between 100,000 and 150,000--one electoral district for each 400 inhabitants, but not more than 300 districts;

In cities with a population of between 150,000 and 250,000--one electoral district for each 500 inhabitants, but not more than 400 districts;

In cities with a population of between 250,000 and 350,000--one electoral district for each 600 inhabitants, but not more than 500 districts;

In cities with a population of between 350,000 and 500,000--one electoral district for each 700 inhabitants, but not more than 600 districts;

In cities with a population of 500,000 and more--one electoral district for each 900 inhabitants, but not more than 700 districts;

In the cities of Moscow and Leningrad--one electoral district for each 3,000 inhabitants.

In city-wards with a population of more than 20,000 there shall be one electoral district for each 500 inhabit-

tants, but not more than 250 electoral districts, in city-wards with a population of less than 20,000 there shall be 35 electoral districts.

Article 50. Descriptions of electoral districts for election to city and city-ward soviets of working people's deputies shall be published by the executive committee of the city or city-ward soviet of working people's deputies not less than 55 days prior to the elections.

Article 51. In each city and city-ward there shall be organized a corresponding City or City-ward Electoral Commission for election to the city or city-ward soviet of working people's deputies.

City and city-ward electoral commissions are composed of representatives from trade union organizations of workers and employees, cooperative organizations, Communist party organizations, organizations of youth, from cultural, technical and scientific societies and other social organizations and societies of the working people legally recognized, and also from assemblies of workers and employees meeting according to enterprise or institution, from assemblies of members of the armed services meeting by military unit, from assemblies of peasants meeting by kolkhoz or village, and from assemblies of workers and employees of sovkhozes meeting by sovkhoz.

Article 52. City, and city-ward electoral commissions shall consist of a president, vice-president, secretary and 6 to 10 members and shall be confirmed as follows:

City electoral commissions in cities under the jurisdiction of the government of the republic, by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR;

City electoral commissions in cities under the jurisdiction of a krai or oblast government, by the executive committee of the krai or oblast soviet of working people's deputies;

City electoral commissions in cities under the jurisdiction of a raion government, by the executive committee of the raion soviet of working people's deputies;

City-ward electoral commissions, by the executive com-

mittee of the city soviet of working people's deputies; not less than 55 days prior to the election.

Article 53. City and city-ward electoral commissions shall:

- a) Supervise the strict observance of the present law in the conduct of elections to city and city-ward soviets of working people's deputies throughout the territory of the city or city-ward;
- b) Examine complaints concerning illegal activities of electoral commissions for election to city or city-ward soviets of working people's deputies;
- c) See that the voters registration lists are up to date and brought to general notice;
- d) See that the revision of precinct boundaries is kept up to date by the executive committees of soviets of working people's deputies;
- e) Prepare ballots for election to the city or city-ward soviet of working people's deputies in the form prescribed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR;
- f) Register the duly elected deputies to the city or city-ward soviet of working people's deputies;
- g) Deliver to the mandate commission of the city or city-ward soviet of working people's deputies the business correspondence concerning the election.

Article 54. In each electoral district for election to city or city-ward soviets of working people's deputies, a District Electoral Commission shall be organized.

District electoral commissions are composed of representatives from trade union organizations of workers and employees, cooperative organizations, Communist party organizations, organizations of youth, from cultural, technical and scientific societies and other social organizations and societies of the working people legally recognized, and also from assemblies of workers and employees meeting according to enterprise or institution, from assemblies of members of the armed services meeting by military unit, from assemblies of peasants meeting by kolkhoz or village, and from assemblies of workers and employees of sovkhoses

meeting by sovkhoz.

Article 55. District electoral commissions for election to city or city-ward soviets of working people's deputies shall consist of a president, vice-president, secretary and 2 to 4 members, and shall be confirmed by the executive committee of the city or city-ward soviet of working people's deputies not later than 50 days prior to the election.

Article 56. District electoral commissions for election to city or city-ward soviets of working people's deputies shall:

- a) Register candidates for deputy duly nominated in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution of the RSFSR and the present statute on elections;
- b) Supply ballots of the correct form to the precinct electoral commissions;
- c) Ascertain the results of the election in the district;
- d) Present to the city or city-ward electoral commission material concerning the results of the elections in the district;
- e) Give the duly elected deputy a certificate of election;
- f) Turn over the business correspondence for preservation by the executive committee of the corresponding city or city-ward soviet of working people's deputies.

## Chapter VII

### Electoral Districts and Electoral Commissions for Election to Rural and Non-urban Soviets of Working People's Deputies

Article 57. The formation of electoral districts for election to rural and non-urban soviets of working people's deputies shall be determined by the corresponding rural or non-urban soviets of working people's deputies.

In accordance with Article 145 of the Constitution of the RSFSR, electoral districts shall be established in conformity to the following norms:

In the territory of rural and non-urban soviets with a population of more than 1,000--one electoral district for

each 100 inhabitants, but not more than 25 districts; in rural and non-urban soviets with a population of less than 1,000 there shall be 9 electoral districts.

Article 58. Descriptions of electoral districts for election to rural and non-urban soviets of working people's deputies shall be published by the executive committees of rural and non-urban soviets of working people's deputies not later than 55 days prior to the election.

Article 59. In each rural and non-urban soviet there shall be organized a corresponding Rural or Non-urban Electoral Commission for elections to rural and non-urban soviets of working people's deputies.

Rural and non-urban electoral commissions are composed of representatives from trade union organizations of workers and employees, cooperative organizations, Communist party organizations, organizations of youth, from cultural, technical and scientific societies and other social organizations and societies of the working people legally recognized, and also from assemblies of workers and employees meeting according to enterprise or institution, from assemblies of members of the armed services meeting by military unit, from assemblies of peasants meeting by kolkhos or village, and from assemblies of workers and employees of sovkhozes meeting by sovkhoz.

Article 60. Rural and non-urban electoral commissions shall consist of a president, vice-president, secretary and 2 to 4 members, and shall be confirmed by the executive committees of the raion soviets of working people's deputies not later than 55 days prior to the elections.

Article 61. Rural and non-urban electoral commissions shall:

a) Supervise the strict observance of the present law in the conduct of elections to rural and non-urban soviets of working people's deputies throughout the territory of the rural or non-urban soviet;

b) Examine complaints concerning illegal activities of electoral commissions for election to the rural or non-urban soviet of working people's deputies;

c) Prepare ballots for the election to rural or non-urban soviet of working people's deputies in the form prescribed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR, and supply ballots to the precinct electoral commissions;

d) Register the duly elected deputies to rural and non-urban soviet of working people's deputies;

e) Deliver to the mandate commission of the rural or non-urban soviet of working people's deputies the business correspondence concerning the election.

Article 62. In each electoral district for election to rural or non-urban soviet of working people's deputies there shall be organized a District Electoral Commission.

District electoral commissions are composed of representatives from trade union organizations of workers and employees, cooperative organizations, Communist party organizations, organizations of youth, from cultural, technical and scientific societies and other social organizations and societies of the working people legally recognized, and also from assemblies of workers and employees meeting according to enterprise or institution, from assemblies of members of the armed services meeting by military unit, from assemblies of peasants meeting by kolkhoz or village, and from assemblies of workers and employees of sovkhozes meeting by sovkhoz.

Article 63. District electoral commissions for elections to rural and non-urban soviets of working people's deputies shall consist of a president, secretary and one commission member, and shall be confirmed by the rural or non-urban soviet of working people's deputies not later than 50 days prior to the election.

Article 64. The district electoral commission for election to rural or non-urban soviet of working people's deputies shall:

a) Register candidates for deputy duly nominated in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution of the RSFSR and the present statute on elections;

b) Ascertain the results of the election in the district;

c) Present to the rural or non-urban electoral commis-



sion material concerning the results of the election in the district;

d) Present the duly elected deputy with a certificate of election;

e) Turn over business correspondence to the custody of the executive committee of the corresponding rural or non-urban soviet of working people's deputies.

## Chapter VIII

### Electoral Precincts and Precinct Electoral Commissions

Article 65. For the purpose of casting ballots and counting votes the territory of city, non-urban and rural soviets shall be divided into electoral precincts, identical for elections to krai and oblast soviets of working people's deputies, the soviets of working people's deputies of autonomous oblasts and national regions, and to raion, city, rural and non-urban soviets of working people's deputies.

Article 66. The boundaries of electoral precincts shall be determined in cities by the executive committee of the city soviet of working people's deputies, in cities with ward divisions by the executive committee of the ward soviet of working people's deputies, in rural areas by the executive committee of the raion soviet of working people's deputies.

The formation of electoral precincts shall take place not later than 50 days before the election.

Article 67. In cities, non-urban settlements, and also in villages in the territory of a rural soviet, where the population is more than 2,000, electoral precincts shall be organized on the basis of one electoral precinct for 1,500 to 3,000 inhabitants.

Article 68. The territory of a rural soviet numbering less than 2,000 inhabitants shall, as a rule, constitute one electoral precinct; in each Cossack village, forest village, or mountain village numbering more than 500 but less than 2,000 inhabitants a separate electoral precinct shall be established.

In villages or groups of villages numbering at least 300 but not more than 500 inhabitants, separate electoral precincts may be established in those cases where the distance from the village to the center of the electoral precinct is more than 10 kilometers.

Article 69. In raions of the far north and east, where the population is sparse, the formation of electoral precincts with a population of not less than 100 inhabitants shall be permitted.

In national regions of the north, and also in mountain and nomadic districts, electoral precincts with a population of at least 50 and not over 100 inhabitants may be organized.

Article 70. Troops and military formations shall constitute separate electoral precincts with not less than 50 nor more than 3,000 voters.

Article 71. In hospitals, maternity centers, sanatoria, rest homes, with at least 50 voters, separate electoral precincts shall be organized.

In hospitals with several divisions, electoral precincts may be organized for each division provided in each case there shall be at least 50 voters.

Article 72. On ships with at least 25 voters, at sea on the day of the elections, separate electoral precincts may be organized, comprising part of electoral districts in the ship's port of registration.

Article 73. On long distance passenger trains, en route on the day of the elections, an electoral precinct shall be established to receive ballots from voters holding a "Certificate of right to vote."

Article 74. In each electoral precinct shall be organized a Precinct Electoral Commission, identical for elections to krai and oblast soviets of working people's deputies, to soviets of working people's deputies of autonomous oblasts and national regions, and to raion, city, rural and non-urban soviets of working people's deputies.

Precinct electoral commissions are composed of representatives from trade union organizations of workers and

employees, cooperative organizations, Communist party organizations, organizations of youth, from cultural, technical and scientific societies and other social organizations and societies of the working people legally recognized; and also from assemblies of workers and employees meeting according to enterprise or institution, from assemblies of members of the armed services meeting by military unit, from assemblies of peasants meeting by kolkhoz or village, and from assemblies of workers and employees of sovkhozes meeting by sovkhoz.

Article 75. Precinct electoral commissions shall consist of a president, vice-president, secretary and 4 to 8 members, but in electoral precincts with a population of less than 500 inhabitants the commission shall consist of a president, secretary and 1 to 3 members, and shall be confirmed in cities by the executive committee of the city soviet of working people's deputies, in cities with ward division by the executive committee of the ward soviet, and in rural localities by the executive committee of the raion soviet not later than 45 days before the election.

Article 76. Precinct electoral commissions shall:

a) Receive affidavits concerning irregularities in the voters registration lists and present them for examination to the executive committee of the soviet of working people's deputies which compiled the list;

b) Conduct polling places for the deposit of ballots;

c) Tally the votes for each candidate for deputy to krai, oblast, okrug, raion, city, rural and non-urban soviet of working people's deputies;

d) Present a return on the voting to the corresponding district electoral commission;

e) Deliver business correspondence to the custody of the executive committee of the corresponding raion or city soviet of working people's deputies.

## Chapter IX

## Nomination of Candidates for Deputy

Article 77. In accordance with Article 146 of the Constitution of the RSFSR, candidates for election shall be nominated by electoral district.

The right to nominate candidates for krai and oblast soviets of working people's deputies, for soviets of working people's deputies in autonomous oblasts and national regions, for raion, city, rural and non-urban soviets of working people's deputies, is guaranteed to social organizations and societies of the working people: to Communist party organizations, to trade unions, to cooperative organizations, to organizations of youth and to cultural societies.

Article 78. The right to nominate candidates for deputy is enjoyed by the central organs of social organizations and societies of the working people as well as by their republic, krai, oblast or raion organs, and also by general meeting of workers and employees in an enterprise or institution and of military personnel in a military unit, by general meetings of the peasants of a kolkhoz or a village, and of workers and employees of a sovkhoz.

Article 79. A candidate for deputy to the soviet of working people's deputies may stand in one, and for any given soviet in only one, district.

Article 80. Candidates for deputy may not serve as members of district or of precinct electoral commission in that district for which they have been nominated as candidates for deputy.

Article 81. Not later than 35 days before the election, all social organizations or societies of the working people nominating candidates for deputy to a krai, oblast, okrug or raion soviet of working people's deputies shall file the nomination for deputy with the corresponding district electoral commission.

Article 82. Not later than 20 days before the election, all social organizations or societies of the working people nominating candidates for deputy to city soviets, city-ward soviets, rural and non-urban soviets of working people's deputies shall file the nomination for deputy with the corresponding district electoral commission.

Article 83. Social organizations or societies of the working people nominating a candidate for deputy shall, in order to file the nomination, present to the corresponding district electoral commission the following documents:

a) Minutes of the assembly or meeting at which the candidate was nominated, signed by the members of the presidium and showing their addresses; in the minutes shall be indicated: the name of the organization nominating the candidate, place, time and attendance at the assembly or meeting; family name, given name and patronymic of the candidate for deputy together with his age, residence, party affiliation, and occupation;

b) Declaration by the candidate for deputy of his consent to stand for the given electoral district from the organization nominating him.

Article 84. The district electoral commission shall register all candidates for deputy nominated by social organizations or societies of the working people in conformity with the requirements of the Constitution of the RSFSR and the present statute on elections.

For each candidate for deputy the district electoral commission shall prepare a certificate of registration in a form prescribed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR. One copy of the certificate of registration shall be forwarded immediately to the corresponding krai, oblast, national region, raion, city, city-ward, rural or non-urban electoral commission together with the declaration by the candidate of his consent to stand for the given electoral district.

Article 85. Refusal of the district electoral commission for elections to krai, oblast, okrug, raion, city, city-ward, rural or non-urban soviet of working people's depu-

ties to register a candidate for deputy may be protested, within a period of two days, to the corresponding krai, oblast, national region, raion, city, city-ward, rural or non-urban electoral commission, whose decision shall be final.

Article 86. The family name, given name and patronymic, age, occupation, party affiliation of a duly registered candidate for deputy to krai, oblast, okrug and raion soviet of working people's deputies, and the name of the social organization nominating the candidate, shall be published by the corresponding district electoral commission not later than 30 days before the election.

The particulars concerning candidates for deputy to city, city-ward, rural and non-urban soviets of working people's deputies duly registered by district electoral commissions shall be published by the corresponding city, city-ward, rural or non-urban electoral commission not later than 15 days before the election.

Article 87. All duly registered candidates for deputy to soviets of working people's deputies must be included on the ballot.

Article 88. District electoral commissions for elections to krai, oblast, okrug, raion, city, city-ward, rural and non-urban soviets of working people's deputies shall deliver ballots to all precinct electoral commissions not later than 10 days before the elections.

Article 89. Ballots shall be printed in the form prescribed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR, in the language of the inhabitants of the corresponding electoral district and in sufficient quantity to supply all voters.

Article 90. Each organization nominating a candidate duly registered by the corresponding district electoral commission, as well as each citizen of the RSFSR, is guaranteed the right to campaign without interference for that candidate, in public meetings, in the press and by other means, in conformity with Article 129 of the Constitution of the RSFSR.

## Chapter X

### Date of Election

Article 91. Elections to krai and oblast soviets of working people's deputies, to soviets of working people's deputies in autonomous oblasts and national regions, to raion, city, city-ward, rural and non-urban soviets of working people's deputies shall be carried out in the course of one day, common through the RSFSR.

Article 92. The date of elections shall be set by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR not later than two months in advance. Elections shall be held on a rest day.

Article 93. During the 15 days preceding the election the precinct electoral commission shall daily give the widest notice to the voters, through the press or by other means, of the date and place of the election.

## Chapter XI

### Balloting

Article 94. Balloting by the voters shall take place on the day of the election from 6:00 a. m. to 12 midnight, local time.

Article 95. At 6:00 a. m. on the day of the election the president of the precinct electoral commission, in the presence of the members, checks the ballot box and examines the voters registration list to see that it is in order, following which he closes and seals the box with the commission's seal and declares the polls open for balloting.

The form of the seal and the ballot box shall be prescribed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR.

Article 96. At the polling place shall be provided a separate room or booth for voters to mark the ballots. No other person except the voter shall be permitted in these

rooms or booths while the ballot is being marked, not excluding the members of the electoral commission.

Article 97. Each voter votes in person, appearing for this purpose at the polling place. The voter casts his ballot by placing his ballot in the ballot box.

Article 98. Upon presenting himself at the polling place the voter shows to the secretary or that member of the precinct electoral commission designated by the latter his passport, or kolkhoz account book, or trade union card, or other satisfactory identification, and after his name is checked on the voters registration list he receives the official ballot.

Article 99. The voter, in that place reserved for the marking of ballots, leaves on the ballot the name of the candidate for whom he is voting, crosses out the names of the others, and then taking his ballot to the ballot box deposits his ballot.

Article 100. Any voter who, because of illiteracy or physical disability, is not able to fill out his ballot himself, has the right to invite into the booth any other voter to help in filling out the ballot.

Article 101. Electioneering at the polls during the balloting is prohibited.

Article 102. If any person appears at the polling place with a "Certificate of right to vote" in conformity with Article 21 of the present statute on elections, the precinct electoral commission shall enter it on the voters registration list, and this note shall be signed by the president and secretary of the precinct electoral commission.

Article 103. The president of the precinct electoral commission is responsible for maintaining order at the polls and his instructions must be obeyed by all those present.

Article 104. At midnight on the day of the election the president of the precinct electoral commission declares the polls closed, and the commission proceeds to the unsealing of the ballot box.



## Chapter XII

## Determination of Election Results

Article 105. Specially designated representatives of social organizations and societies of the working people, and representatives of the press, have the right to be present at the place where the precinct electoral commission counts the ballots, during the count.

Article 106. The precinct electoral commission, after breaking the seal of the ballot box, counts the ballots by district, checking the number of ballots cast with the number of persons marked on the voters registration list as receiving ballots, and enters the results on the voting return for each electoral district.

Article 107. The president of the precinct electoral commission canvasses, in the presence of all the members of the precinct electoral commission, the choice indicated on each ballot.

Article 108. Any ballot on which more than one candidate's name is left shall be declared spoiled, and also any ballot not of the prescribed form.

Article 109. In case of contradictory opinions concerning the validity of a ballot, the question shall be decided by a vote of the precinct electoral commission, which shall be entered in the voting return.

Article 110. The precinct electoral commission shall fill out, in duplicate, a voting return for each electoral district, in a form prescribed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR, and signed by the members of the precinct electoral commission, including the president and secretary.

Article 111. On the voting return the precinct electoral commission shall indicate:

- a) Time of opening and closing the polls;
- b) The total number of voters in the given electoral dis-

trict or precinct appearing on the voters registration list;

c) The number of voters to whom ballots were given;

d) The number of voters who cast ballots;

e) The number of ballots declared invalid;

f) The number of ballots on which the names of the candidates were crossed off;

g) The number of votes cast for each candidate for deputy;

h) A short statement of the affidavits and complaints presented to the precinct electoral commission, and the decisions taken by the precinct electoral commission.

Article 112. After counting the ballots and signing the return, the president of the precinct electoral commission shall proclaim to the assembly the results for each district.

Article 113. After signing the voting return the president of the precinct electoral commission shall immediately send one copy of the return in sealed envelope by special delivery to the corresponding district electoral commission.

Article 114. All ballots (valid and spoiled ballots separated) shall be sealed by the precinct electoral commission and delivered, together with the second copy of the voting return, the business correspondence and the seal of the precinct electoral commission, by the president of the precinct electoral commission to the custody, in cities, of the executive committee of the city soviet of working people's deputies, in cities with ward division, of the executive committee of the ward soviet of working people's deputies, in rural localities, of the executive committee of the raion soviet of working people's deputies.

Article 115. The executive committees of the soviets of working people's deputies shall preserve the ballots pending instructions from the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR.

Article 116. Specially designated representatives of social organizations and societies of the working people, and also representatives of the press, have the right to be present at the place where the district electoral commission tallies the returns, during the tally.

Article 117. District electoral commissions for elections to krai, oblast, okrug, raion, city, city-ward, rural and non-urban soviets of working people's deputies count the votes and determine the results of the election for the district on the basis of the returns presented by the precinct electoral commissions.

Article 118. The district electoral commission shall fill out, in duplicate, a voting return in the form prescribed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR, signed by the members of the district electoral commission, including the president and secretary.

Article 119. On the voting return the district electoral commission shall indicate:

- a) The total number of voters in the district;
- b) The number of voters who received ballots;
- c) The number of voters who cast ballots;
- d) The number of ballots declared invalid;
- e) The number of ballots on which the names of the candidates were crossed off;
- f) The number of votes cast for each candidate for deputy;
- g) A short statement of the affidavits and complaints presented to the district electoral commission, and the decisions taken by the district electoral commission.

Article 120. After completing the count and signing the return, the president of the district electoral commission shall announce the results of the election to the assembly.

Article 121. The candidate for deputy to the soviet of working people's deputies who receives an absolute majority, that is, more than half of all the ballots cast in the district and accepted as valid, shall be considered elected.

Article 122. The president of the district electoral commission shall present to the elected candidate for deputy a certificate of his election as deputy to the soviet of working people's deputies. The form of the certificate shall be prescribed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR.

Article 123. After signing the voting return the president of the district electoral commission shall immediately

send one copy of the return in a sealed envelope by special delivery to the corresponding krai, oblast, national region, raion, city, city-ward, rural or non-urban electoral commission.

The second copy of the return, together with the voting returns from the precinct electoral commissions and the business correspondence of the district electoral commission the president of the district electoral commission shall deliver to the custody of the executive committee of the corresponding krai, oblast, okrug, raion, city, city-ward, rural or non-urban soviet of working people's deputies.

Article 124. Sessions of the electoral commissions for elections to the soviets of working people's deputies shall be considered lawful if more than half of the full membership participates.

All questions in the electoral commissions shall be decided by simple majority vote; in case of tie the vote of the president shall be decisive.

Article 125. If no one of the candidates shall receive an absolute majority of the votes, the district electoral commission shall note the fact specially on the voting return, inform the corresponding krai, oblast, okrug, raion, city, city-ward, rural or non-urban electoral commission and at the same time proclaim a run-off for the two candidates who received the largest number of votes, and shall also name a date for the run-off not later than two weeks after the first election.

Article 126. If the number of ballots cast in the district shall be less than half the number of voters entitled to vote in that district, the district electoral commission shall make special notation to that effect on the voting return and immediately inform the corresponding krai, oblast, okrug, raion, city, city-ward, rural or non-urban electoral commission, which in that case shall call a new election not later than two weeks after the first election.

Article 127. Run-off elections of candidates for deputy, and in like manner new elections in place of those declared invalid, shall be conducted on the basis of the voters regis-

tration lists compiled for the first elections and in full compliance with the present statute on elections.

### Chapter XIII

#### Penalties for Infringements of the Electoral Rights of Citizens

Article 128. Anyone who by coercion, fraud, intimidation or bribery shall hinder any citizen of the RSFSR in the free enjoyment of his right to vote and be elected to soviets of working people's deputies in the RSFSR, shall be punished by two years deprivation of liberty.

Article 129. Any official of a soviet or member of an electoral commission who falsifies electoral documents or deliberately makes an illegal count of votes, shall be punished with deprivation of liberty for a term of three years.

## NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

1. For a full discussion of these questions see Saratov Zemstvo, Vseobshchee izbiratelnoe pravo (Saratov, 1905), and Polozhenie o vyborakh v gosudarstvennuu dumu, s raziasneniami pravitelstvuiushchago senata i ministerstva vnutrennikh del (St. Petersburg, 1907). An English summary is Samuel N. Harper, The new electoral law for the Russian дума (Chicago, 1908).

2. Oliver Henry Radkey, The election to the Russian Constituent Assembly of 1917 (Cambridge, 1950), is the best treatment of this election.

### Chapter I

1. D. Magerovskii, "Preface," in S. M. Brodovich, Sovetskoe izbiratelnoe pravo (Leningrad, 1926), p. 4.

2. G. S. Gurvich, Istoriia sovetskoi konstitutsii (Moscow, 1923).

3. Kommunisticheskaiia Akademiia, Institut Sovetskogo Stroitelstva, Stroitelstvo sovetskogo gosudarstva, sbornik pervyi (Moscow, 1929), p. 287.

4. Sobranie uzakonenii i rasporiazhenii rabocheho i krestianskogo pravitelstva RSFSR [hereafter SU], 1927, No. 6, St. 49.

5. SU, 1927, No. 6, St. 50.

6. SU, 1927, No. 62, St. 554. These norms were established by the Central Executive Committee August 1, 1927.

7. Brodovich, p. 84.

8. USSR, Central Electoral Commission, Vybory v sovety i nashi zadachi; sbornik statei i materialov k izbiratelnoi kampanii 1928-29 g. (Moscow, 1928), p. 84.

9. Ibid., p. 83.

10. Sistematicheskoe sobranie zakonov Z[Transcaucasian] SFSR (Tiflis, 1929), I, 178-79.

11. Presidium of the Central Executive Committee USSR, March 4, 1927, in USSR, Vybory...28/9, p. 142.

12. NKIu, Sbornik tsirkuliarov, 1922-25, No. 122 (June 18, 1925), p. 400.

13. Presidium of the Central Executive Committee USSR, October 17, 1928, in USSR, Vybory...28/9, p. 144.

14. V. Mokeev, Novyi zakon o vyborakh v sovety (Moscow, 1927), pp. 25-31.

15. Sistematicheskoe sobranie zakonov ZSFSR, pp. 178-79.

16. Mokeev, pp. 40-41.

17. Ibid., pp. 23-24.

18. RSFSR, Sovnarkom, Upravlenie delami, Ot sezda k sezdy. Dva goda piatiletki. Materialy o rabote pravitelstva RSFSR k perevyboram sovetov 1930 g. (Moscow, 1930), pp. 8-9.

19. Sbornik deistvuiushchikh raziasnenii verkhovnogo suda RSFSR, 1923-1929 (Moscow, 1930), GK 2, 2 (4 May 1925).

20. Ian Poluiian, "Perevybory sovetov 1928-29 goda," in Kom. Ak., Stroitelstvo..., p. 119.

21. Ibid.
22. USSR, Vybory...28/9, p. 80.
23. Ibid., pp. 80-81.
24. Ibid., p. 81.
25. RSFSR, Ot sezda k sezdy, p. 23.
26. Ibid., pp. 21-22.
27. Ibid., p. 20.
28. Ibid., pp. 20-21.
29. Ibid., pp. 22-23.
30. See for example decree of Central Executive Committee, November 19, 1928, SU, 1928, No. 21, St. 239.
31. Ibid.
32. Dragomir Isakovich, Le pouvoir central et le système électoral de la Russie soviétique (Paris, 1927), pp. 276-77.
33. SU 1927, No. 6.
34. Interview with Boris Olshansky, member Voronezh city soviet, 1934-39.
35. Resolution of plenum, Central Executive Committee, July 20, 1926, quoted in Mokeev, pp. 20-21. The statute on court structure had been quite frank about the necessity of securing the election of the right persons as people's assessors, the only popularly chosen personnel in the judicial hierarchy. See articles 20 and 21, "Polozhenie o sudoustroistve RSFSR," in Sobranie kodeksov RSFSR (2d ed.;



Moscow, 1923), I, 384-85; also "O vyborakh i deiatelnosti narzasedatelei," in NKIu, Sbornik tsirkuliarov, 1922-25, No. 168 (1924).

36. Mokeev, pp. 22-23. Presumably this was tantamount to approval, but there seems to be a legitimate distinction between nominations made subject to the approval of some other authority, and appointments which are valid unless specifically challenged, post facto, by another authority.

37. Ibid., pp. 13-17.

38. Sistematicheskoe sobranie zakonov ZSFSR, pp. 177-78. I have used the ZSFSR as an example for the union republic with less complex administrative division.

39. Mokeev, p. 16.

40. Ibid., pp. 21-22.

41. Sistematicheskoe sobranie zakonov ZSFSR, p. 157.

42. Mokeev, p. 24.

43. Poluian, loc. cit., p. 118.

44. Sobranie postanovlenii T[Turkmenian] SSR, 1929, Nos. 5-6, St. 44 (January 1, 1929); this confirms an ordinance of the Central Executive Committee of the TSSR (December 24, 1928), No. 444.

45. Isakovich, pp. 258-59.

46. Mokeev, pp. 43-44.

47. SU ZSFSR, 1927, No. 22, St. 244, paragraphs 20-37 cover the procedure of assemblies.

48. Mokeev, p. 45.

49. In rural soviets. In the unlikely event of there being more precincts holding electoral assemblies than there were members of the commission to elect, the raion electoral commission fixed the manner of electing the revision commission for the district. Sobranie postanovlenii TSSR, 1929, Nos. 7-8, St. 70 (February 1, 1929).

50. Sistematicheskoe sobranie zakonov ZSFSR has model forms for use in work of electoral commission and electoral assembly.

51. USSR, Vybory...28/9, pp. 82-83.

52. Sistematicheskoe sobranie zakonov ZSFSR, pp. 160-63.

53. Mokeev, p. 46.

54. USSR, Vybory...28/9, p. 85.

55. Russia, People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, Statistical Bureau, Predvaritelnye itogi izbiratelnoi kampanii v sovety RSFSR v 1924-1925 g., ed. S. M. Gurvich (Moscow, 1925), pp. 57-58. Hereafter cited as Predvaritelnye itogi...24/5.

56. Ibid., pp. 7-17 (Table 1).

57. Ibid., pp. 59-60.

58. Russia, People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, Vybory v sovety RSFSR v 1925-6 (Moscow, 1926), p. 39. Hereafter Vybory...25/6.

59. Predvaritelnye itogi...24/5, pp. 18-21 (Table 3).

60. Ibid., pp. 22-25.

61. Ibid., pp. 34-37 (Table 7).
62. Ibid., pp. 26-41.
63. Ibid., p. 47.
64. Ibid., pp. 42-47.
65. Ibid., pp. 48-51.
66. About 225,000 party members and Komsomols in 1927-1928, when the party membership was approaching 1,500,000. Calculated on basis of percentage of Communists in rural and urban soviets reported for the whole of the USSR, and the total number of deputies elected.
67. Vybory...25/6, and USSR, Central Electoral Commission, Vybory v sovety i sostav organov vlasti v SSSR v 1928 (Moscow, 1928); hereafter cited as Vybory...28.
68. Vybory...28, pp. 5-27; Mokeev, p. 19; Poluian, loc. cit., p. 129; RSFSR, Ot sezda k sezdy, p. 3.
69. Vybory...28, passim.
70. Leningradskoe upravlenie narodnokhoziaistvennogo ucheta, Ekonomiko-statisticheskii spravochnik Leningradskoi oblasti (Leningrad, 1932), pp. 610-11.
71. Ibid., p. 613.
72. For 1929 and 1930-31 from M. Raab, "Ne povtoriat oshibok proshloi izbiratelnoi kampanii," Vlast sovetov, No. 17 (September 15, 1934); for 1934 from Molotov's report to the Seventh All-Union Congress, on changing the constitution, Vlast sovetov, No. 4/5 (March 15, 1935).
73. Vlast sovetov, No. 4/5, pp. 39-46.

74. Ibid., p. 44.

75. Ibid.

76. Decree of Seventh All-Union Congress, February 6, 1935, text in Vlast sovetov, No. 4/5, p. 46.

## CHAPTER II

1. These statements are based on notes of conversation or lectures.

2. Interviews with Boris Olshansky, former member of Voronezh city soviet, and Nicholas Laskovsky, former teacher in Leningrad.

3. Electoral law for supreme soviet of the union adopted by Central Executive Committee of the USSR July 9, 1937 (Biulleten postanovlenii Leningradskogo oblispolkoma, No. 20, July 20, 1937, pp. 1-7).

Electoral law for the supreme soviet of the RSFSR adopted by Central Executive Committee of the RSFSR February 16, 1938 (ibid., No. 6, February 28, 1938, pp. 1-6).

Electoral law for all local soviets in RSFSR adopted by supreme soviet of the RSFSR July 29, 1939 (ibid., No. 22/23, August 30, 1939, pp. 1-12).

4. Polozhenie o vyborakh v kraevye...sovetye RSFSR (Moscow, 1939), Article 26.

5. Polozhenie o vyborakh v verkhovnyi soviet RSFSR (Moscow, 1938), p. 15.

6. See, for example, S. L. Ronin, "Desiat let Stalinskoi konstitutsii," Izvestiia Akademii Nauk SSSR, Otdelenie ekonomiki i prava, No. 6 (1946), p. 403; I. V. Levin, "Vyборы v verkhovnyi soviet i sovetskaia izbiratelnaia sistema," in ibid., No. 6 (1945), p. 2.

7. N. Lagovier in Sovetskaia iustitsiia, 1937, No. 1 (January 15), p. 10.
8. For example see decree of September 30, 1950, setting local elections in RSFSR, Pravda, October 1, 1950.
9. SZ 1937, No. 43, St. 182, Articles 23, 24.
10. Polozhenie (1938), p. 4.
11. Sample form for voter lists in ibid., pp. 6-7.
12. SZ 1937, No. 43, St. 182, Articles 13 and 15; also Polozhenie (1938), pp. 8-9.
13. SZ 1937, No. 43, St. 182, Articles 16-19; Polozhenie (1938), p. 11.
14. Sobranie postanovlenii i rasporiashenii pravitelstva SSSR, 1938, No. 22, St. 146, "On the manner of examining complaints about irregularities in the voting lists by the people's courts" (May 5, 1938). Confirmed by directive of the Commissariat of Justice of the USSR October 24, 1945, No. D-31. (Sobranie postanovlenii hereafter cited SP SSSR.)
15. Polozhenie o vyborakh v kraevye, oblastnye...sovety... RSFSR, October 8, 1947 (Vedomosti verkhovnogo soveta SSSR 1947, No. 36), Articles 78, 79.
16. Pravda, January 13, 1949, p. 2.
17. Polozhenie (1939), Article 84.
18. Polozhenie (1947), Article 79.
19. "Te komu doveriaet narod," Ogonek, No. 47 (November 19, 1950), p. 9.

20. Polozhenie (1947), Article 80.

21. Ibid., Articles 85, 86.

22. Theodore Bayer, "Your questions answered," Soviet Russia today, April, 1950, p. 24.

23. Olshansky interviews.

24. The experience of communities such as Leonia, New Jersey, is very illuminating in this context. For ten years or so the voters have been presented on election day with a ballot containing the name of only one candidate for each local vacancy, a circumstance precisely parallel to that confronting the Russian voter on election day. The agreement on a single slate has been accomplished by an association incorporating most organized groups in the community--except churches--and thus representative of a large percentage of the adult population. This method is regarded by its proponents as more satisfactory than the former practice of having the names of two candidates of rival national political parties appear on the ballot. The local branches of those parties are included in the association. Where formerly the nomination of candidates was by party organ, which represented in its active membership only a small percentage of the population, the nominating process is now one of securing the ablest local citizen who can be persuaded to do the job. The individual so selected is, by the single slate ballot, guaranteed against the baser practices of American political campaigns, and candidates of high caliber who had neither the time nor the stomach for campaigning served in elective office. As its proponents aver, the community, by the association's method, is putting its best men and women in public office, rather than electing the less obnoxious of two party hacks picked by a small party caucus.

There are, of course, many examples of this pre-election agreement that results in no contest on election day, both in the United States and in other "democratic" countries. A

great many of the rural communes in the French republic, for example, have followed the practice for years.

25. Ministerstvo prosveshcheniia RSFSR, Pionerskaia organizatsiia imeni V. I. Lenina (Moscow, 1950), p. 45, and Postanovleniia VIII plenuma VTsSPS (Moscow, 1939), describe election practice in those organizations.

26. Interview with M. Miroshnikov, former member of district electoral commission in Leningrad.

27. Olshansky interviews.

28. Based on conversations with Professor Robinson.

29. There is a detailed program of the activities involved in a soviet campaign in A. Vakhmistrov, Agitatsionno-massovaia rabota na izbiratelnoi uchastke (Moscow, 1945), summarized in Julian Towster, Political power in the USSR, 1917-1947 (New York, 1948), pp. 187-96.

30. Sotsialisticheskaia zakonnost, 1939, No. 8/9, p. 9.

31. See Pravda, October 29, 1950, p. 2.

32. Polozhenie (1947), Article 90.

33. Based on experience of Laskovsky in Leningrad, as reported in interviews.

34. Polozhenie (1947), Articles 27-28.

35. Biulleten...Lenoblispolkoma, No. 29/30 (November 20, 1939), p. 1.

36. A. Gorkin, Izбирatelnyi zakon sovetskogo gosudarstva (Moscow, 1945), p. 18.

37. Levin, loc. cit., p. 5.
38. Polozhenie (1947), Article 29.
39. Ibid., Articles 41-48.
40. Biulleten...Lenoblispolkoma, No. 29/30 (November 20, 1939), pp. 5-9.
41. Polozhenie (1947), Articles 30-32.
42. Ibid., Articles 65-76.
43. Polozhenie (1938), p. 21.
44. See pages 78-79 for example of exception from Ukrainian elections of 1939.
45. Polozhenie (1939), Article 94.
46. Polozhenie (1938), pp. 26-27.
47. Polozhenie (1947), Articles 94-104.
48. Polozhenie (1939), p. 41.
49. Ibid., pp. 62-63, and 69-70.
50. Miroshnikov interview.
51. Ibid.
52. SZ 1937, No. 43, St. 182, Article 99; Polozhenie (1947), Articles 116-22.
53. Polozhenie (1947), Articles 114-15; SZ 1937, No. 43, St. 182, Articles 96-97.



54. Polozhenie (1938), pp. 45-46; SZ 1937, No. 43, St. 182, Article 108; Polozhenie (1939), Articles 127-28; Polozhenie (1947), Articles 125-26.

55. Polozhenie (1938), Article 80 and pp. 29, 36; Polozhenie (1939), Article 110; Polozhenie (1947), Article 108.

56. Polozhenie (1939), Article 131. Interference with voting privileges called only for a two year sentence; ibid., Article 130.

57. Visti rad deputativ trudiashchikh URSR, November 2, 1939, p. 3. (Hereafter cited as Visti.)

58. Ibid., November 4, 1939.

59. Ibid. The oblast has an area of 26,900 square kilometers.

60. Ibid., November 12, 1939.

61. Ibid., November 11, 1939.

62. Ibid., November 17, 1939.

63. Ibid., November 12, 1939, reports selection of delegates for several district meetings for Kiev oblast.

64. Ibid., November 18, 1939.

65. Ibid., November 20, 1939.

66. Ibid., November 29, 1939.

67. Literaturnaia gazeta, January 8, 1953.

68. Ronin, loc. cit., p. 405.

69. Moscow News, January 4, 1948, p. 2; Sovetskoe gosu-

darstvo i pravo, January 1951, pp. 2-3; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. II, No. 51 (February 3, 1951), pp. 27-28.

70. Pravda, December 22, 1950.

71. Moscow News, January 17, 1948, p. 3.

72. Pravda, December 18, 1950.

### CHAPTER III

1. Sotsialisticheskaja Zakonnost, 1939, No. 8/9, p. 9.

2. Ocherki po istorii organov sovetskoi gosudarstvennoi vlasti (Moscow, 1949), p. 39; see SU 1917, No. 3, St. 49, for December 4, 1917 decree on recall.

3. Sistematicheskoe sobranie ZSFSR, p. 173, forms 22-23.

4. Article 142 of the constitution is the basis for laws on the recall of deputies.

5. L. I. Mandelshtam and A. I. Tikhonov, "Deputat--sluga naroda," Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i pravo, 1952, No. 12, pp. 29-39.

6. Ibid., p. 33.

7. Ibid., pp. 32-33. The soviet deputy is somewhat in the position of the star salesman in the outlying territory of a large organization who goes to the annual meeting; he must not take too much time from work, the trip to the home office is a reward for being the best, and he goes through pep sessions so he will take the "up and at 'em" spirit back to the provinces.

8. L. G. Mareieva, "O srokakh polnomochii deputata," Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i pravo, 1948, No. 9, p. 54.

9. Ibid., p. 55.
10. Ibid., p. 56.
11. Ibid., p. 57.
12. Ronin, loc. cit., p. 411.
13. Levin, loc. cit., p. 5.
14. Ibid., pp. 5-7.
15. Mareieva, loc. cit., p. 53.
16. Laskovsky interviews.
17. In a recent school district referendum in southern Cook County, Illinois, less than 10 percent of the electorate turned out to pass a tax rate increase by 73 to 1. This is the more striking as there is a single landowner in the district, almost all adult residents have school age children, and Illinois law does not require that voters be registered for school elections, merely qualified. The sentiment of the district was undoubtedly accurately reflected in the vote, and the result would have been no different if 1 percent or 100 percent had voted.
18. For twenty judgeships an identical list of twenty names was published twice on the ballot; once under the Republican and once under the Democratic party label. This is an achievement beside which the party and non-party Bolshevik bloc is as nothing!
19. For example, "Vybory v sovety deputatov trudiashchikh-sia i zadachi prokuratury," Sotsialisticheskaja zakonnost, 1939, No. 8/9, pp. 8-10. The same article also states that the desired results are not achieved without a lot of hard work (p. 8).

20. The Ukrainian Visti during November-December 1939 has a good representative series of photographs, with captions giving occupations, of candidates. The pictures of nominating meetings, and the accounts of them, strongly support the thesis that nomination to the soviet is in the nature of a public honor.

21. Ogonek, No. 47 (November 19, 1950), p. 10.

